

Acknowledgements

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Instructions on Using the Notes

Study notes should never be used as the be all and end all of bible study, but rather, they ought to be used as a **guide only**. They should be used to make you *think* about the word of God and to apply that thinking to your own life.

These notes have been designed to make you *think*. Brother Thomas, in Elpis Israel highlights the need for us to *think for ourselves*. He says to approach our consideration of biblical principles with '*independence of mind*' and hence bible study requires us to weigh up all thought in the firm light of scripture. These notes have been written with this express purpose in mind. That is, to encourage you to *think* and to take ownership of your own study.

Throughout these notes, you will find sections titled 'explore', 'think about', 'application' and 'further study'. These areas require you to think a little more deeply about the content than a mere 'reading over the notes' provides. These notes will be far more effective for you if you approach it in this manner.

Examples can be seen as follows:



Explore

Compare Ahaziah's description of Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8 with Heb 11:37. Do you think it is possible the writer to the Hebrews is telling us about Elijah?

Explore sections are designed to get you to look up references and to *think* about what the relevance of these are in relation to the life of Elijah. In these explore sections you may also be asked to investigate passages of scripture that relate either directly to the passage or to concepts raised in it. Often times these links are a lot deeper than they first appear.



Think About

When Elijah left Israel, how many 'christadelphians' would there have been? Even though there was persecution, what would 'ecclesial' life be like? Consider that in all Australia we have only 10,000 christadelphians.

Think about sections are there to prompt thoughts in your mind which you can explore on your own. They also get you to apply specific events found in the narrative of Elijah and apply them in a modern day context.



Application

When we encounter trials in our life they are obviously very difficult to deal with. No one likes them. We are exhorted continually to 'cast our burden upon the LORD' and yet so often when trials become too big, we, like the widow have a tendency to turn away from God.

Consider the following passages in relation to trial and note down what they are talking about.

Application sections ask you to apply scriptural principles to your own life and to see the word of God as living and powerful and such that it affects the way we live.

Above all, these notes have been written to allow you to develop a better relationship with our Heavenly Father. So, let us prayerfully and reverentially approach this study of a great man of God and seek to develop a strong relationship with our Father.

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Abbreviations used in the notes

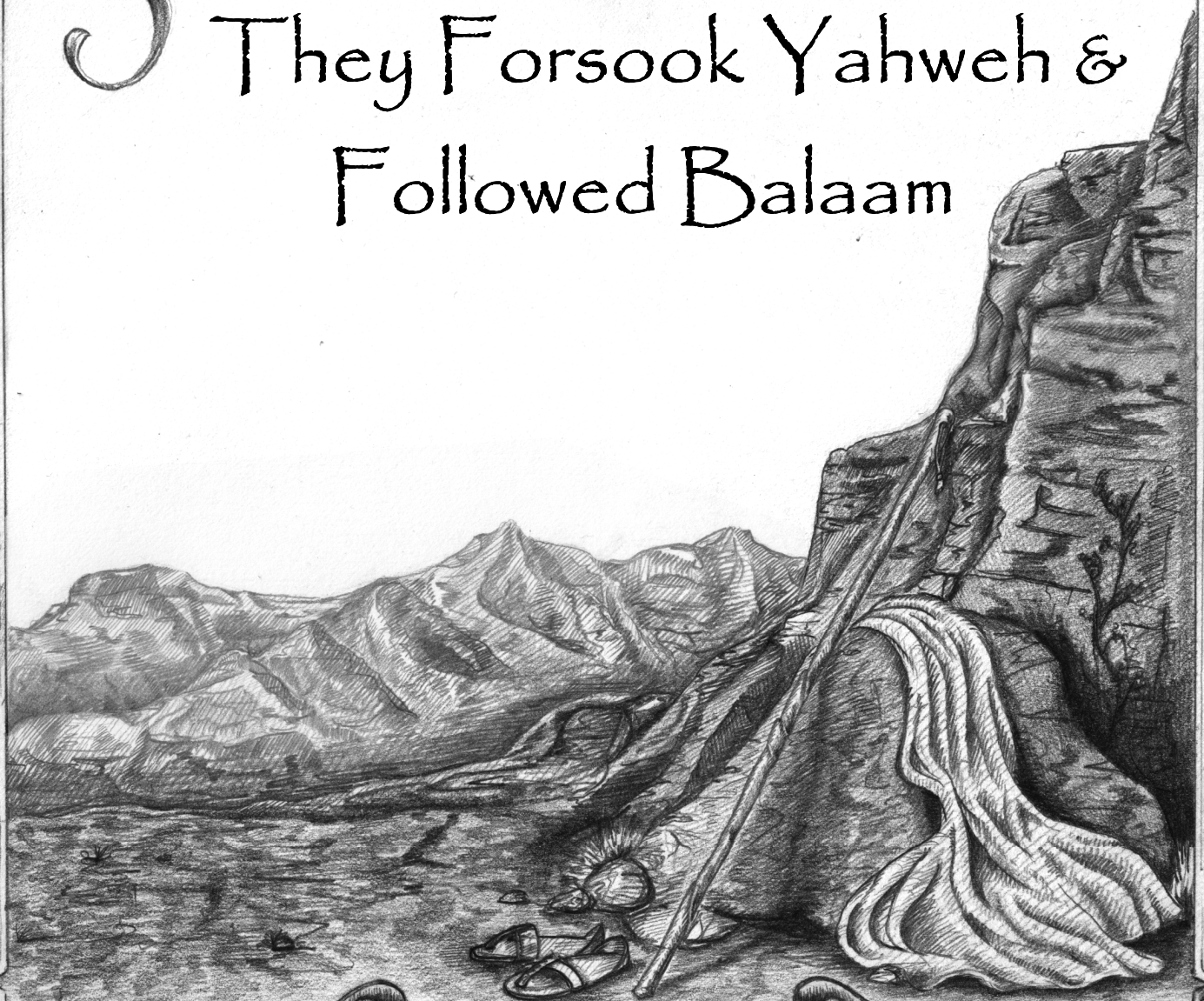
- ALT = Analytical – literal Translation
- AMP = The Amplified Bible
- ASV = American Standard Version
- BBE = Bible in Basic English
- CEV = Contemporary English Version
- Dby = 1889 Darby Bible
- ESV = English Standard Version
- GNB = Good News Bible
- GW = God's word
- ISV = International Standard Version
- KJV = King James Version
- LITV = Literal Translation of the Holy Bible
- LXX = Septuagint
- NASB = New American Standard Bible
- Roth = Rotherham's Emphasized Bible
- RSV = Revised Standard Version
- RV = Revised Version
- WEB = World English Bible
- YLT = Young's Literal Translation

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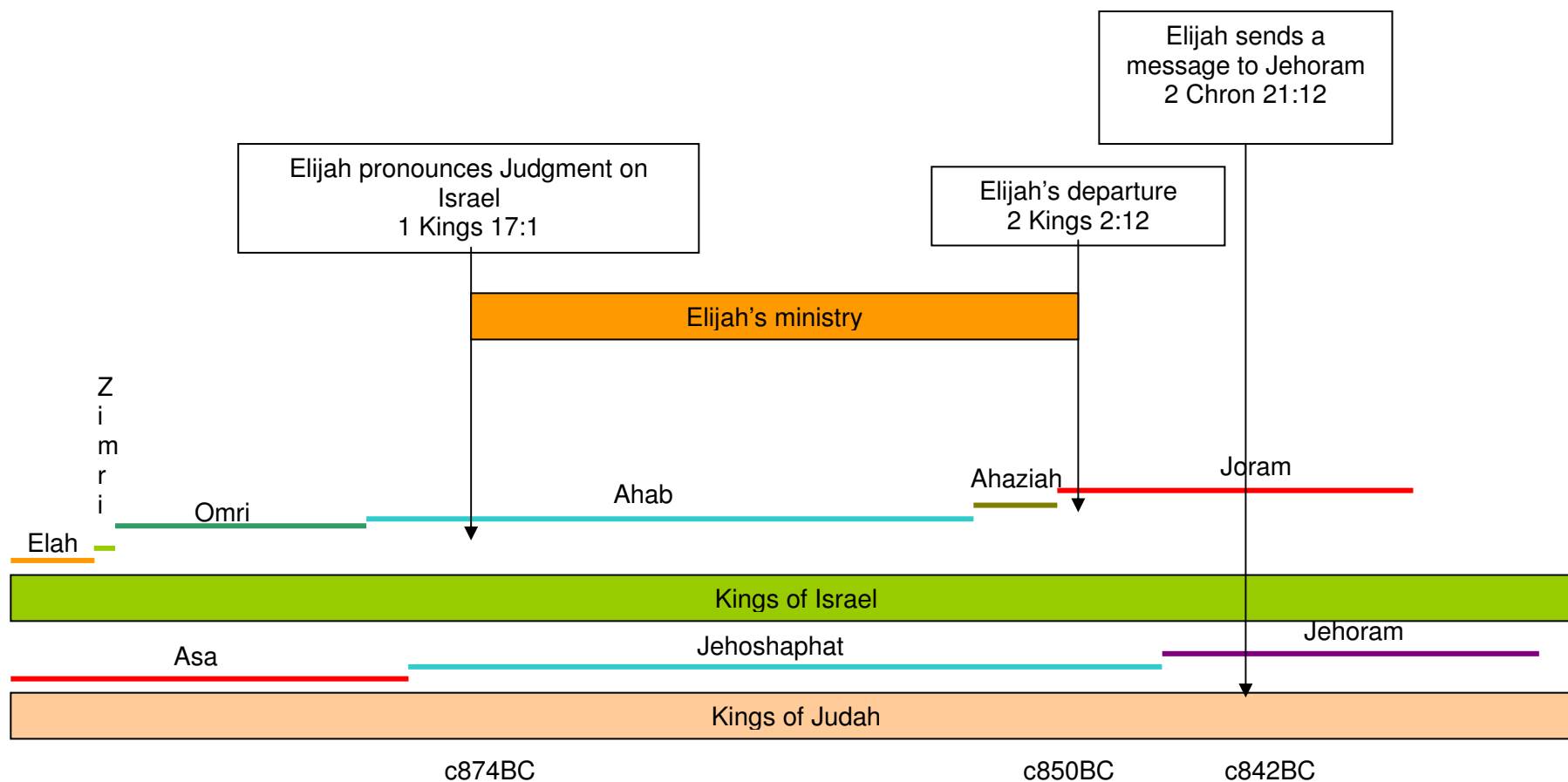
BACKGROUND STUDY

They Forsook Yahweh & Followed Balaam



STUDY WEEK 2008

Elijah's Lifetime & History of the Nation



Background

Without going too far back in history, 1 Kings 15-16 deals with the apostasy that flowed within the Northern Kingdom since its beginning under Jeroboam 1. This history shows to us the gross apostasy that Jeroboam 1 integrated into the Northern Kingdom's religious worship and how every king after him followed in his footsteps. These influential and politically powerful men were actively involved in perverting the Truth and turning it into the apostate worship of the surrounding nations under the guise of Yahweh worship.

The apostasy was also not only seen in wrong doctrine, but was also evident through wrong practise. The kings of Israel in 1 Kings 15-16 are shown as being murderers, drunkards, blasphemers and involved in treason. This influence filtered through to the general population.

The people of Israel were gradually turned from Yahweh worship to Baal worship and now this worship was deeply entrenched into the nations psyche to the extent where out of a nation of over 2 million only 7,000 remained in the Truth.

It is into this then that we find Elijah, a rough and yet righteous man, who was given the commission to turn Israel around from their apostasy and back to God. This was to be Elijah's work throughout his ministry; a very difficult task indeed.

1 Kings 16:29

“And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years.”

As a result of Jeroboam's example all kings after him attempted to emulate his worldly greatness. Repeatedly throughout the records of 1st and 2nd Kings the words *“who followed after Jeroboam in his sin in which he made Israel to sin”* are mentioned in relation to those kings who were evil and turned the nation away from Yahweh.

“38th year of Asa”

The chronology concerning Omri and Ahab appears to become a little confused at this point. It appears that both Omri and Ahab reigned for 5-6 years as co-rulers of the nation Cp v23. However, careful reading reveals otherwise.

By considering this chapter in its entirety, it can be seen that Omri commenced his reign in the 27th year of Asa King of Judah thereby quelling any irregularity.



Explore

Read through this chapter and mark down when each king began to reign. How does this rectify any problems that may be perceived by v23 and 29?

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Ahab		
Asa		
Omri		

“Samaria”

This place was set up by Omri and was synonymous with idolatry throughout Israel's history (Cp 1 Kings 16v24).

“22 years”

Ahab's reign, like Jeroboam's (Cp 1 Kgs 14:20) was one where the word of God was corrupted and greater division was created between God and Israel.



Kingdoms of Israel and Judah 924 - 722 BC

1 Kings 16:30

“And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him.”

“evil”

An example of how evil Ahab was, is evident from the following quotation.

“And he (Jehoram – Ahab's son) wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made” (2 Kgs 3:2).

**Explore**

Read through 1 Kings 12-16 and jot down the evil that Jeroboam did.

Consider the following kings who succeeded Jeroboam and compare their “walk” in relation to the example of Jeroboam. Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri and Omri.

“above all that were before him”

Just how evil were the kings before Ahab? Another quotation that displays how evil Ahab was is found in 1 Kings 21:25.

“But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.”

**Explore**

Look up the words for “sell himself” in 1 Kgs 21:25. What does it mean (note the context)? Can you find any links with this in the New Testament? E.g. Rom 7:14



Think About

In our walk in the Truth we must be ever careful not to fall into the trap of causing others to sin like Jeroboam who made Israel to sin (1 Kings 16:26). This is not merely in literally making a person do something that is wrong, but goes much further. Consider the Apostle Paul's application of this principle in 1 Cor 8:11-13.

In our lives, what influence are we having on our friends, family and ecclesia? Could we be causing them to sin?

1 Kings 16:31

“And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him.”

“a light thing”

The word in the Hebrew means to be trifling or of little account (BDB). It is frequently translated as ‘curse’ (Cp Gen 30:15; Num 16:9).

Ahab looked on the sins that he committed with complete indifference. In fact it's almost as if he's looking down on those things he's doing with a sort of disdain as if it's just not 'bad' enough hence 'cursing' them. It's like he's saying “that's child's play” and making a mockery of it – when in actual fact they were sins of the grossest kind.



Application

Ahab took Jezebel, a princess of the Zidonians, as his wife. Whether he did this for political reasons or because he liked Jezebel is not important. He did not marry her because she was a worshiper of Yahweh. Yahweh was not the focus of their relationship.

When thinking about what type of person God wants us to marry, what should we look for? (Eph 5:20-33, Prov 31:10-31, 1 Pet 3:1-8)

Paul warns us about being unequally yoked with an unbeliever (2 Cor 6:14-18). It is important to look for someone who shares your beliefs about God.

What immediate impacts did Ahab's marriage have on his relationship with God?

“sins of Jeroboam”

Jeroboam's sin was primarily found in *causing others to sin*. He merely made life easier for the people in creating this new form of worship. Not only was he promoting apostasy, but he was also causing other people to therefore sin! This was the main thing that he is remembered for in scripture.

“took to wife”

This one act was worse than all the kings previous to Ahab had done! This gives us an indication as to the kind of woman Jezebel was. She was one that drew Ahab and the nation away even further from the Truth.

**Explore**

What did it mean to be a Zidonian? Look up the following passages and asses what impact this would have made on the nation of Israel with Jezebel as their queen.

Judg 10v12, Judg 18v7, 1 Kings 5v8, 1 Kings 11v5,33, 2 Kings 23v13

Bro Thomas says in *Elpis Israel* that the practise of marriage outside of the Truth has been ‘ever fruitful of apostasy’.¹ There are countless examples of this throughout scripture starting first with the marriage of the Sons of God to the Daughters of Men in Gen 6. The same idea is picked up in relation to the Moabites and the Children of Israel in Numbers 25 and specifically in relation to the Zidonians, Solomon. Note in 1 Kgs 11:4-10 which god is mentioned first that Solomon “went after”.

“Jezebel”

Jezebel is one of the most evil characters in the bible. In fact, she is so evil that the Catholic Church is likened to her in Revelation. (Cp Rev 2:20) Consider how she manipulates Ahab to pervert the nation of Israel. Note the order of the statements in v31-33. Jezebel *gradually* got her way;

Worship Baal – v31.

Brought Baal worship into Israel – v32.

Caused groves and idols to be set up – v33.

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Jezebel		
Ethbaal		

Jezebel encouraged the ordination of 450 prophets of Baal and 400 of the grove (Astarte) who ate at her table – 1 Kgs 18:19.

Persecuted the prophets of God by;

Cutting them off – i.e. sacrificed them to Baal – 1 Kgs 18:4,13.

Threatened to murder Elijah – 1 Kgs 19:2.

Shed ‘the blood’ of the servants of God – 2 Kgs 9:7.

Arranged to have Naboth stoned and his sons – 1 Kgs 21:14-15; 2 Kgs 9:26.

“Ethbaal”

Faussett says the following about Ethbaal²

¹ Thomas, J. (1966) *Elpis Israel – 4th Edition: Revised* (Pg 119), The Christadelphian, Birmingham

² Faussett’s Bible Dictionary

Priest of Astarte. Murdered Pheles, 50 years after Hiram's death, and usurped the throne of Tyre for 32 years, 940-908 B.C.

1 Kings 16:32-33

“And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.”

“House of Baal”

Not only is there an altar, there is also a temple! It is thought that this temple was built more for convenience so that instead of travelling all the way to Zidon, Ahab and Jezebel could offer their sacrifices on the altar here in Samaria. The extent of the apostasy has dramatically risen.

“grove”

A goddess of fortune and happiness, the supposed consort of Baal. This seems to be a significant grove because it's spoken of many years later;

“Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, but walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria” (2 Kgs 13:6).



Explore

Note down the changes in the state of apostasy from its inception with Jeroboam (start at 1 Kings 12). What does this tell us about the nature of sin and apostasy?

What Ahab should have done, by commandment and example was as follows:

Throw down the altars of Baal – Judg 6:25.

Destroy all altars, images and groves when Israel entered the land – Ex 34:13.

Kept the commandments. The first two commandments were broken;

- Thou shalt have no other gods beside me.
- Thou shalt not make any graven image.

There are many links between Jezebel and the apostate system, of which the Roman Catholic Church is the “Mother of Harlots” in Revelation. Analyse the following quotes and see how they apply directly to the narrative of Jezebel in 1 Kgs 16, 18, 19, 21, 2 Kgs 9.

Quote	Application to the Apostate System	Application to Jezebel
Rev 2:20		
Rev 6:9; 11:12		

Quote	Application to the Apostate System	Application to Jezebel
Rev 9:20-21		
Rev 11:9		
Rev 12:1		
Rev 13:5-6		
Rev 14:8; 17:2,4-5		
Rev 16:9-11; 19:20-21		
Rev 17:16		
Rev 18:24		

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1 Kings 16v34

“In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.”

This is a rather obscure verse and almost seems out of place in the narrative. However, it gives us great insight into the lifestyles of a number of the places in Israel, how wide spread the apostasy had become and also allows us to see the positive impact that Elijah had in the nation by the time of his departure.

This verse is a direct fulfilment of the prophecy or promise in Josh 6:26 regarding the rebuilding of Jericho.

“...with the loss of his first-born shall he lay the foundation thereof, and with the loss of his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it” (ASV).

This prophecy was fulfilled down to the minutest of details. Why is it then that such a clear prophecy was ignored? The answer can only lie in the fact that the nation were not reading their bibles or speaking with the Levites. The reason for this can be traced back to Jeroboam.

Over time, the persecution by the authorities on the saints forced them out of the land and there had been a gradual ‘drying up’ of the word of God. As a result there was no one left with a voice to say “this is the way, walk ye in it”. Consider the following acts of the kings in drying up the word of God.

Priests and Levites are forced to leave – 2 Chron 11:13-14.

The believers are forced to leave – 2 Chron 11:15.

Believers are stopped from entering the land through Ramah on the border of Judah
– 1 Kgs 15:17.
The one Levitical city that was left (Gibbethon) was now controlled by the Philistines
– 1 Kgs 15:27.

Now, the last entry point into Judah, Jericho, has been built and is ruled by an apostate. It is for this reason, for the drying up of the word of God that Jericho was rebuilt. The nation had become wilfully ignorant to the word of God. They were only interested in self. This is evident in Hiel the Bethelite's actions after his first son was killed.

Bethel and Jericho

Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho. He was an apostate man who grew up in an apostate town (1 Kgs 12:28-30) and has now brought that apostasy to Jericho. These two towns were centres of apostasy in Israel.

The beauty of the work of Elijah in turning Israel around from their wickedness is that when Elijah leaves he does so through both Bethel and then Jericho. These two towns which were once centres of apostasy now have thriving ecclesias with schools of the prophets re-established in both of them (Cp 2 Kgs 2).



Developing a Relationship With God

Overview for Session 1

1 Kings 17

This is the first time in Scripture that we meet Elijah. It sees Israel in severe drought and the associated sufferings the nation endured. This chapter sees two people enduring the same trials in the form of a drought and also in the loss of a loved one. As we progress through this chapter, we see two people of great faith and how they responded to their distressing situations.

Chapter Breakup

V1 - Elijah's announcement to Ahab.

V2-7 – Elijah's trial at the Brook Cherith.

V8-16 – Elijah meets the Widow of Zarephath.

V17-24 – The death of the Widow's son.

Themes to Look Out For

Prayer and Meditation – How it helps us develop our relationship with God.

God lives! God lives through the words and actions of his servants and the relationship that they have developed with him.

Trial – How to deal with trial in a positive manner.

Relying on God's provisions – How does our faith dictate how we act towards what we are given?

Part 1 - Elijah's Announcement to Ahab

1 Kings 17v1

“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.”

This is the first mention of the prophet Elijah in the Bible and it stands in stark contrast with the previous chapter. In chapter 16 we were introduced to the many evil kings of Israel with their family history and how they attained the throne, while here with Elijah we have no heritage listed at all. Elijah was unknown in scripture and yet it was this man who was one of the most righteous men in the bible and was selected by God to perform the great work of turning Israel.

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Elijah		

Although Elijah had his failings which we will consider in detail throughout these notes, it is important to always keep in mind the description of Elijah from God's perspective, a righteous man (Cp Jas 5:16). Hebrews 11 also makes an allusion to Elijah in v37 in relation to the garments he wore.



Explore

Compare Ahaziah's description of Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8 with Heb 11:37. Do you think it is possible the writer to the Hebrews is telling us about Elijah?

“Tishbite”

It is unknown exactly where Tishbi is. The only record known of a place bearing this name (or similar) is Thisbe (mentioned in the apocryphal book of Tobit) in upper Galilee to the south of Kadesh in Naphtali.¹ It is likely that Tishbi was the place of Elijah's birth, but that he lived in Gilead.

“inhabitants”

Hebrew = a stranger or emigrant, sojourning in a strange country where he is not naturalised (Cp Lev 22:10; 25:47).²

This suggests to us that Elijah was one of a number of strangers or settlers who left the western part of Israel and went to live in Gilead. This word is also found in a number of other places in scripture (Cp Gen 23:4; Lev 22:10; 25:35,47).



¹ Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament

² Gesenius, H. W. F. Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament



Explore

Elijah had a solid and prayerful relationship with God. Consider what James says in Jas 5:17-18 and also about his origin. In comparing these characteristics with other characters in scripture, how do you think his origin may have impacted on his relationship with God? Cp Ex 3:1, Isa 40:3 & Luke 6:12.

“Gilead”

Located on the East side of Jordan. Generally a remote and sparsely populated area. This was a region, not a city. It was a good grazing area and therefore had lots of open spaces (Cp Num 32:1; 1 Chron 5:9; Deut 32:14).

In such a place as Gilead, Elijah would not have the ‘pressures’ of a hectic lifestyle and therefore the ability for him to develop his relationship with God was heightened due to the lack of external influences.



Application

To the reader of Scripture, Elijah was anonymous. We read of no family background, and he lived in the middle of ‘no where’. ‘Ecclesial life’ on the East side of Jordan would be dramatically reduced to the west and yet it is here, in this place that Elijah lived the Truth and further developed his relationship with God.

Although it is generally accepted that living in isolation is not the ideal circumstance for life in the Truth, and especially for young people, it is important to see that there can be benefits. One of these is the large amount of time that one has available for meditation and developing a relationship with God through prayer – a thing that Elijah is renowned for.

It may not be possible, practical or ideal for us to move into ‘isolation’ nor is it required in order to develop a strong relationship with God, however, we need to do the same thing as Elijah and make a conscious decision to **make time** for God. You may like to call it ‘wilderness time’. There is a necessity in our life that we make significant time for prayer and meditation so that we can develop our relationship with God.

In our modern busy life it is easy to feel like we don’t have time for a lot of things. It is true that we “make time” for the things we feel are important or enjoy. It is important to plan God into every part of our lives. Consider your commitments during the week and plan time where you can spend “wilderness time” in developing a relationship with God. Fill out your weekly planner found on page 43.

Elijah was a man of prayer and the time he had in prayer helped him in his daily life. In every area of Elijah’s recorded life we see what a positive relationship he had with God. He always saw God as an absolute reality in his life and always went to him as a first point of call in both good times and bad.

NB – The one time Elijah did not (1 Kgs 19:3) he made a mistake by trusting in himself rather than God. It was his one blemish recorded regarding his prayerful relationship with Yahweh.

“As the LORD God of Israel liveth”

These are the first words that are recorded to have been spoken by Elijah. There is no opening salutation or kind introduction. It is a message from a God who lives. Consider the following translations of this phrase.

- “As the Eternal God of Israel lives” – Moffatt.
- “By the life of Yahweh God of Israel” – Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible.

To refer to a God who lives seems redundant. Of course Yahweh is living; he is God. The concept of Yahweh being a living God is used throughout scripture as a measure of certainty. These opening words by Elijah form the premise as to why his message should be listened to; that it is from the eternal God of Israel that lives. The surety of the very existence of God was the compelling reason as to why his pronouncement from this living God should be heeded. But in an era where the dominant national religion is Baal worship, it takes on extra significance. It was a direct confrontation, setting up the terms under which Elijah would operate and directly challenging the existence of other gods. If Yahweh, the God of Israel, was alive, then what was Ahab's god Baal?

Despite Israel’s rejection of Yahweh as their God on a national scale, he was still their God! Their nation was founded on his principles and upon his promises to their fathers. Their existence was not on the basis of their acknowledgment of him, but on the faithfulness of his character and the surety of his existence. Israel were fully aware of his existence as one prophet at a later date would testify that their existence as a nation was evidence to the existence of Yahweh (Cp Isa 43). As the king of Israel, Ahab was having his attention brought to the fact that if he was to lead this nation, he was to listen to the pronouncement from the God upon whom this nation was established. The implications of this initial phrase is; Yahweh lives, so listen to him!

The idea (that Yahweh lives) first appears in Deut 5, while Moses is recounting the experiences of the nation at Mt Sinai (Cp Deut 5v24-27). One feature stands out in the record - this is a God who speaks with his people. Elijah, in mentioning the God who lives, isn't just trying to lend weight to his words, he's trying to tell them something important - in contrast to the dumb idols around them, their God lives, and he has a message for those who would come close enough to hear.

**Think About**

The big question was this: were they willing to listen? Are we? Because God is alive and speaking to us; through the circumstances of life, through the messages and rebukes of our brothers and sisters, and mostly by means of his word. Do we receive his message for us, a message that we may need to change, that actions have consequences, that turning our back on God might cost us? Or do we prefer to shut our ears and keep on going our own way?

This initial phrase, is a major theme for the rest of the chapter, which focuses from this moment on "the word of the Lord" and the reliance of various people upon it. Because as the rain stopped and the grass shrivelled and died, not to spring up again, first Elijah and later the widow of Zarephath would be forced to listen to God and trust what he said if they hoped to make it through. The principle that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD (Cp Deut 8v3), was one which would have very practical implications.

“before whom I stand”

YLT = before whom I have stood

The sense is that it is a serving role Cp CEV Cp Deut 18:5. For Elijah, the fact that God was real and alive had practical implications for his life. Every moment for him was spent as if he were standing in the presence of Yahweh. For Elijah, this was to be embraced, not hidden from. It spoke of service, of the fact that he had devoted his entire life to doing the will of God, and it gave him confidence to stand in front of the king, a man with the power of life and death, and with no fear declare the beginning of a period of terrible national suffering.

“in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Psa 56:11).

Although this is the first time we read of Elijah in the Bible and we have no historical record prior to this, James gives us insight into Elijah’s life before 1 Kgs 17:1 and highlights Elijah’s prayerfulness and love for Israel as a nation.



Explore

Look up Jas 5:16-17 and note down what it says about Elijah’s life prior to 1 Kings 17.



Think About

This passage in James is in the context of praying for one another and especially for the spiritually sick and uses the example of Elijah as an example of the power of prayer. Elijah was praying that it might not rain and God heard his prayer. What does this tell us about the power of prayer? Why might Elijah’s example be used here?



Explore

What does Deut 11:13-17 tell us about the nation of Israel at this time? How does 1 Kgs 18:37 prove to us that Elijah’s mind was in Deut 11 when praying for the drought? What is the common phrase in all these chapters?

Deut 11:13-17

1 Kgs 18:37



Think About

When we are praying for others, where is our motivation? Do we have their best interests at heart? How do we view trials in others’ lives? Do we pray for the trial to be taken away, or do we pray for God to strengthen them as we understand that trials ultimately shape us for the purpose of God being able to use us in his service?

“dew nor rain”

It is interesting to note that this not only was a literal drying up but also a spiritual drought.

“My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (Deut 32:2-3).

The same thing happened in Amos’ day (Cp Amos 8:11).

“according to my word”

The word of God comes to Elijah ten times throughout his life. Elijah is propelled by the word of God. What about us? How does the word of God motivate us in our life?

We will read of one time when Elijah makes a dramatic move on his own accord and he finds out he is wrong.

**Think About**

From the drought we have had in Australia in recent years, can you think of any other effects a drought may have on people in Israel at the time who relied primarily on agriculture for their income? What about the population in general?

Section Summary

Elijah's background was unknown and insignificant.

Elijah made the choice to move from Tishbi to Gilead and hence into 'isolation'.

Elijah saw the nation had turned aside and prayed for a drought to get them to turn.

Elijah pronounces judgment on Israel from the God who lives.

Yahweh was a reality in the life of Elijah.

Discussion Group Questions

What is the importance of forming a relationship with God?

What is the importance of "wilderness time" and time spent in prayer to God?

Why did Elijah ask God to send the drought? What was his motivation for this?

What would it have been like to stand before a king, especially one as wicked as Ahab?

What are the implications of God living and how can we openly proclaim this today?

How does the faith that God lives give us encouragement to pronounce his word?

How was Elijah being taught that God was in control?

Further Study



Explore

This drought was to last for 3.5 years (Cp Jas 5:17-18; Lk 4:25). Using the principle of 30 days in a month, this equates to 1,260 days which is a very significant figure in scripture.

Look up the following passages which refer to this time frame and relate them back to the events here in Elijah's life and what this religious system was doing.

Rev 11:3,6

Dan 7:25 – What was this religious system doing and what are the similarities with Jezebel?



Explore

In contrast to this, the Lord Jesus Christ's ministry occupied a space of 3.5 years where the opposite effect was seen. The water of life flowed freely. Find several references which talk about God's word being like water.

[illegible]

Part 2 – Elijah's Trial at the Brook Cherith

1 Kings 17v2-7

“And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the Brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

So he went and dwelt by the Brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.”

“Get thee hence”

It was not long after Elijah had delivered this message to Ahab that Yahweh told him to leave Samaria and go into hiding. Elijah obeyed.



Explore

Obedience was a demonstration of the relationship that Elijah had with his God. God commanded and Elijah responded in obedience. What does this demonstrate about Elijah's faith?

“hide thyself”

Lit. Absent thyself (Cp Gen 39:41). Elijah wasn't hiding, he was merely being removed from the situation.

“Brook Cherith”

A cutting, gorge, ravine. Also means separation.

This is the first of the bizarre things that Yahweh tells Elijah to do. Elijah in this scene is being moulded by God to have absolute trust in Him and to rely on God for everything.

Easton³ says this about the Brook Cherith.

“It has by some been identified as the Wady el-Kelt behind Jericho, which is formed by the junction of many streams flowing from the mountains west of Jericho. It is dry in summer. Travelers have described it as one of the wildest ravines of this wild region, and peculiarly fitted to afford a secure asylum to the persecuted.”

“ravens”

The second of the bizarre things God tells Elijah about. Ravens were unclean under the law (Cp Lev 11:13,15) and hence an abomination to Elijah, yet God commands them to provide food for Elijah. Ravens also have difficulty in feeding their own young.

“Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat” (Job 38:41).

A picture can be created of a raven as it flies with a constant beat of its wings around the desert for miles and miles in the dry blistering heat in search of a rotting carcass that it might

³ Easton's Bible Dictionary

provide food for its young. This food was rare and therefore precious once found, yet God had commanded these birds to give meat to Elijah.



Explore

The obedience of Elijah is something that really features in the record. Fill out the table below and think about how his obedience demonstrated his relationship with God.

1 Kings	What did God ask Elijah to do?	Did he do it (Y/N)?
17v3-4		
17v8-9		
18v1		
19v15		



Explore

Elijah was going to learn to apply the principles he learned at Cherith in his everyday life through his dealings with the widow of Zarephath.

In the table below, outline what principle was being taught and how it would prepare him for his future work.

Feature at Cherith	Principle being taught	How it would help Elijah later?
Raven - Leviticus 11:13-15	Cp Acts 10:15	
Raven - Job 38:41		
Small Provisions	Cp 1 Kgs 19:12	

“after a while”

YLT = the end of days. In other words, the set time was finished and at this point God would directly intervene.

It is not known how long this was; other places use the same phrase and suggest that it could be a year. Cp Ex 13:10 in the Hebrew.



Think About

How much do we trust in God that he will provide for us each day? What do we often do to prepare for ourselves for the future instead of trusting in God? Lam 3:22-24, Isa 33:16, Psa 37:19 & 25, Psa 78:19-20.

“dried up”

Although God was trying to teach Elijah that he needed to have complete dependence and reliance on God through the sending of the ravens to feed him, God still allowed the natural course of events to happen. It is important to remember that it was Elijah who had prayed for this drought and was therefore not excluded from its consequences.

The brook would have flown well at the start of the drought, however, it would gradually reduce in size from a bubbling brook with less and less water, to a trickle, to puddles, to stagnate puddles and eventually to mud. This would have been a great test to Elijah's faith as he saw God's power on one hand in the provision of food, but also the natural course of life to take place.

**Think About**

During this time, even though Elijah would have prayed to God, God did not respond to him until the very last moment. Put yourself in Elijah's shoes. How would you respond as you slowly saw the brook dry up?

Would you;

- Panic?
- Blame God - why did God make such a tragic situation?
- Argue with God - why didn't you miraculously provide me with water?
- Say that God can't be trusted - he said he'd provide for me!
- Move from Cherith to Jordan where there is an abundance of water?
- Would you be able to justify in your mind that God would want you to move rather than to wait and rely totally on Him?
- Question God as to why he sent you here?

Section Summary

Elijah is commanded by God to go to the Brook Cherith.

God commanded the ravens to feed Elijah bread and meat.

Elijah goes to Cherith where the ravens feed him in the morning and evening.

After a period of time the Brook Cherith dries up.

Discussion Group Questions

Why did God send Elijah to Cherith?

How did Elijah respond to God's command? How does this demonstrate the relationship that Elijah had with Yahweh?

What lessons was Elijah being taught in the provision of bread and meat by the ravens?

How would the lessons of Cherith be applicable to later events in his life (particularly the widow of Zarephath)?

What lessons can we get out of how God provided for Elijah with the ravens, and yet how he still wanted him to depend on him through the drying of the Brook Cherith?

How does God provide for you and me? How do we respond when our faith and dependence upon him is being tested?

How do we see the events of today as shaping us for the work of tomorrow?

Part 3 – Elijah's Meets the Widow of Zarephath

1 Kings 17v8-9

“And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.”

No doubt Elijah would have prayed about the trial of no water at the Brook Cherith, the response to his prayers however is a new trial which is perhaps more severe than the first.

In this next section, we are about to see both Elijah and the widow of Zarephath's faith tried.

‘That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ’ (1 Pet 1:7).

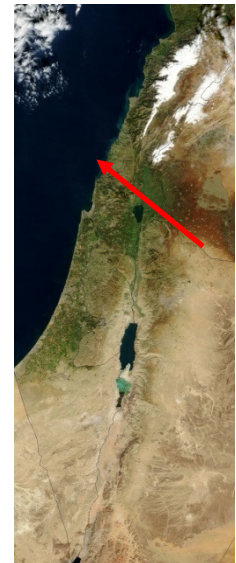
“Zarephath”

Zarephath was not so large as to be called a city, but rather a town. Excavations show a ‘considerable’ size of the town, however, this is quite small by today's standards. The extent of the town is thought to be approximately 1.5 Km along the Mediterranean coastline.

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Zarephath		

It would be very difficult for Elijah to remain concealed in such a small place, particularly a man of his appearance.

Note also that the trek from Cherith to Zarephath was approximately 180 kms and therefore equated to approximately 3 days journey through a kingdom where he is a wanted man. To take this journey would take enormous faith, yet Elijah complies with God's command without question (Cp Jas 2:20).



“Zidon”

Jezebel's father's kingdom. Note that Ahab, when seeking Elijah sought him not only in Israel but also in all surrounding “Kingdoms and nations” (1 Kgs 18:10). In human terms this was not a safe place for Elijah.



Explore

Christ talks about this event in Luke 4v25-26. Why was Elijah sent to a widow in Zarephath? It seems that there were plenty of widows in Israel at this time. What is the focus of Jesus' comments in regard to this event?

“I have commanded”**Explore**

Where have we seen this exact phrase before? What was Elijah being taught under these previous circumstances and how does it parallel to the current situation? Hint: What is the widow found doing and why?

In this phrase we can see clearly the work of the word in Elijah's life. The word of the LORD had come to him to command him, and now we find that it is God's word that is making provisions for him yet again (cp 1 Kings 17v4). From this phrase, it implies that the woman had either a vision or was visited by an angel or some other method from God to allow her to understand this.

It appears that the widow understood the Truth from phrases like “Yahweh thy God liveth” and that her actions reflect the actions of a saint e.g. not counting the cost of food and water in a drought (Cp 1 Kgs 17:11,15).

“widow”

Note that this is another trial for Elijah. Naturally speaking, widows were one of the most disadvantaged groups in Israel (Cp Deut 24:19) and were to be looked after with special care.

**Explore**

Look at the following references and investigate how widows and other underprivileged classes were supposed to be treated in the kingdom of Israel.

Deut 24v19-21

Matt 23v14

Mark 12v42

James 1v26-27

1 Kings 17v10-12

“So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.”

The widow of Zarephath was an extremely faithful woman as evidenced through her actions in providing for Elijah. Picture the scene. It is the middle of a severe drought, this woman is a widow, she thought this was her last meal, its likely that she knew who Elijah was (she had been commanded to sustain him v9, many would have heard about who Elijah was due to the drought), and Elijah requests water from her.

Yet look at how the widow responds, ‘and as she was going to fetch it’, she was faithful in her actions. Elijah then makes a second request for some bread. Imagine the pressure that this poor widow would have felt.

“called to her”

The record doesn’t state Elijah was told that this was the woman whom God had commanded. Yahweh had placed the woman there and it was up to Elijah to determine whether this was the widow that God had commanded. This event was to test his faith to see if he believed God had provided for him (cp Gen 24v10-28).

“water in a vessel”

The widow obediently went not counting the cost of this precious resource in time of severe drought (Cp Matt 25:37-39).

“As the LORD thy God liveth”

The widow knew the name of God, recognized that Elijah was the servant of this God and that this God lived in contrast to many of the other gods who didn’t.

This phrase is one that is found throughout the story of Elijah. Firstly by Elijah himself and now by the widow. Yahweh was a living God. The widow knew this. She, herself had been commanded by this God and the evidence of his existence was seen in the obedience of Elijah.

**Explore**

“As the LORD thy God liveth” - Where else is this phrase or a similar phrase used in the story of Elijah? Why do you think this statement is used in the context of these passages?

“meal... oil”

“All the woman had was a “handful of meal in a barrel” (Cp 1 Kgs 17:12). What is significant about this? A handful of meal was God’s portion of the meal offering, given to the priest to be burnt upon the altar (Cp Lev 2:2; 5:12; 6:15; 9:17). This offering demonstrated the dedication of an individual’s labours to God, and only the finest flour could be offered (Cp Lev 2:1, 4, 5, and 7). Furthermore, the whole offering had to be drenched with oil (v.1).”⁴

**Explore**

What does Malachi (Mal 1:11) say about the meal offering? Who will offer this? What is the significance for Elijah?

The question to the woman was if you believe that I (Elijah) am really from God then I want that meal. This widow had to decide what she would do with her only bit of food left.

“two sticks”

The widow is speaking by “meiosis” which expresses less than what is meant. e.g. I could say I earned practically nothing and earn \$30,000 per year whereas practically nothing would be \$100 per year. She is merely exaggerating her position.

There is also a spiritual aspect to these words for the only other time the Hebrew for two sticks (Henayim Etzim) are mentioned in scripture is in Ezekiel 37:15-19 in relation to the stick of Israel and the stick of Judah being joined into one stick once our Lord Jesus Christ has returned. These two sticks therefore, metaphorically represented the two kingdoms of Israel that would be joined in the future. Isn’t it significant then that it is Elijah here in this context that lead the restitution of all things (Cp Acts 3:21) and it will also be Elijah in the future who will again join together Israel and Judah (Cp Mal 4:5-6).

“eat it and die”

This is possibly one of the saddest situations in the Bible. This woman is obviously going through a tremendous trial (Cp Lam 4:9).

1 Kings 17v13-16

“And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Elijah.”

⁴ Whitehouse S, The Testimony: Lessons from the life of Elijah, Oct 2004

“Fear not”

LXX = Be of good courage, CEV = Everything will be fine

Elijah is trying to tell the widow that it will be ok in that she will be cared for in that the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil. The widow however, must recognize this.

**Explore**

“Fear not” - This expression is used throughout the Bible to various people who were under trial. Explore where these words are used and how these simple words give encouragement to people in difficult circumstances. Why could Elijah say these words with such confidence considering the current circumstances?

**Explore**

Joel describes how the nation of Israel had turned from God and to apostasy. In Joel 1:8-10 we are told that the meat and drink offering were cut off from the house of Yahweh and hence the ability to make it was not possible. What does Joel tell us about the ability to make a meat and drink offering? Cp Joel 2:12-14

Apostasy robbed the person of this ability to make an offering to God whereas humility gave it back. Here is the widow in the middle of a nation in apostasy and here she has the two ingredients to make an offering to God. She can give it to herself and her child or she can give it to Elijah, who if she does, she will always have the ability to serve God as the barrel of meal will not waste nor the cruse of oil.

“cake”

Hebrew means an ashcake i.e. a small round cake.

Note the sacrifice that the widow had to make in this situation. Her choice was between providing for herself and her son or providing for a complete stranger. She has faith very similar to the widow who cast her mite into the treasury (Mk 12:42).

**Explore**

Note the similarities between what this widow did and those who the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of in Matt 10:37-42. NB - There are at least 6.

Widow of Zarephath	Widow with two mites



Think About

The attitude of the widow and her mite and the widow of Zarephath and the cake are the ideal to which we should strive when giving. Very often we can be drawn into the thinking of legalism in merely giving as a matter of 'law' while not allowing the principle of this giving to affect our heart.

Consider the following questions in relation to your life.

- Why do I give?
- When I give, do I do it for a reward?
- Does my giving come from an appreciation of what Christ gave for me?
- Does my giving spring from faith or works of 'law'?
- When I give, do I give in a way that will significantly affect my lifestyle?

“sendeth rain”

Elijah did not know the time when God would send the rain. It was all in God's control. This was not only a test of the widow's faith, but also for Elijah. Elijah was merely the instrument by which God would send the rain. The work was all of the word of God.

“she went and did”

Like Elijah, her faith was demonstrated in her obedience. She did not know how this miracle was going to happen but she had faith in the saying of Elijah. There was something in Elijah's words that gave her the confidence and belief in his God, the God that lives.



Explore

This word for 'cake' in the Hebrew is used on only one other occasion. Where is this and what does it imply to us about the widow's faith?

“according to the word of the LORD”

Again, there is an emphasis on the word of the LORD. The word had commanded and according to his word, things happened. The basis of faith and a relationship with God was being developed in these two individuals so that when faced with something totally outside their control, they would have reason to believe him based on his faithfulness which was demonstrated here in providing for their needs.

The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil. It provided life for the widow, her son and also Elijah. Just like Elijah with the ravens, the barrel nor the cruse were overflowing with food. Both Elijah and the widow were again being taught to trust in God that he would provide for them daily.

Section Summary

Elijah is commanded to go to Zarephath to be cared for by a widow.

God had commanded the widow to provide for Elijah.

Elijah obeys God and goes to the widow in Zarephath.

Elijah commands the woman to give him a glass of water and a small cake.

The widow professes the extremity of the drought and how she was going to make a cake for her and her son to eat and die.

Elijah comforts her and reassures her that God would provide for them by not allowing the oil or meal to run out.

The widow obeys Elijah's words and God provides for him and her house for many days.

Discussion Group Questions

How did Elijah's obedience demonstrate his relationship with God?

How did the events at the Brook Cherith prepare him for the events of the widow at Zarephath?

What was Jesus' comment about this event and what particular point was he making?

How does trial sometimes make us think negatively and resort to the worst possible outcome?

How can we use the events of the past and the demonstration of God's faithfulness as grounds to believe him when he challenges our faith in him?

Further Study



Explore

The flour and oil has a number of links back to Israel in the wilderness and also in relation to Christ being the bread of life of whom if we eat, we shall never hunger.

What do Ex 16:15-18 and Num 11:8 say about the provision of the manna in the wilderness? What are some of the allusions made to this in 1 Kgs 17?



Explore

How do the following verses speak about to Christ in relation to manna and also as bread?

John 12v24

John 6v35,38

John 1v32-33

Part 4 – The Death of the Widow's Son

1 Kings 17v17

“And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?”

This verse commences a new trial for both Elijah and the widow.

“mistress of the house”

The Hebrew for ‘mistress’ (Baalah – female equivalent of Baal) is only used on 2 other occasions (1 Sam 28:7; Nah 3:4) both of which are in relation to witchcraft or sorcery. The question beckons therefore as to whether the widow had carried over any of her former ways into her present life.

“fell sick”

It is likely that this was a quick acting illness for the widow would surely seek help from Elijah earlier if it was a gradual sickness.

The question for the widow now is how is she going to respond? If we were to put ourselves in her situation how would we respond? Curse God and die? Blame God or would we choose the ideal and search for Elijah and pray with him?

“What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God?”

It is evident from these words that the widow is in a frantic and emotional state for if it were not for Elijah then she would have died 12 months ago (Mg for many days = a full year). In answer to her question, she has everything to do with Elijah.

In this statement there is a sense of utter confusion. On one hand she is blaming Elijah for bringing about this great evil on her and her family, and on the other hand she is stating her belief that he is a man sent from God. During times of great trial when her faith is challenged she seems to act and speak irrationally (“that we may eat it, and die” 17v12). She is an emotional wreck and in this cry of desperation, both expressing her disassociation from Elijah and her plea for help to him as a man of God, she resorts to blame and helplessness.

“my sin to remembrance”

Although she struggles in her faith upon the death of her son, she does recognise that she is a sinner and death comes to all under mortality. This does demonstrate that although she is struggling, the widow of Zarephath is extremely faithful.



Application

When we encounter trials in our life they are obviously very difficult to deal with. No one likes them. We are exhorted continually to ‘cast our burden upon the LORD’ and yet so often when trials become too big, we, like the widow have a tendency to turn away from God.

Consider the following passages in relation to trial and note down what they are talking about.

Heb 12:13-14

Jas 1:2-4

What is the common thread throughout these passages that helps us deal with our trials?



Application

The author of Hebrews talks about lifting up the hands that hang down and is quoting from Isa 35:3. This chapter deals with many positive facets of the Truth such as a wilderness that produces fruit (v1), it talks about the way of holiness and God encouraging them along it (v8-10) and concludes with the words that 'sorrow and sighing will flee away'. Clearly the writers advice in dealing with our trials is to remain focused on the Kingdom.

When going through trial we can tend to ask why and look for answers to this question. Although this is a natural response, what does the psalmist advise that we do in Ps 55v22?

Why do you think we need to ask for help rather than seek answers to the question why? Provide scripture to support your response.

1 Kings 17v19-20

"And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See,

thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth”

We now turn to Elijah and see exactly what a righteous man he was. His response to this trial of the dead boy (which he obviously felt seeing he lived with him) was the ideal. Prayer.

“Give me thy son”

Elijah was decisive in reacting to the widow's plea - he takes it straight to God in prayer. Elijah had learnt through his past experiences of trial that he needed to utterly and totally depend on God, firstly by committing our trial to him in prayer. This immediate response is a demonstration of the closeness of relationship that Elijah had with his God. His God was a living God and therefore would know what to do in relation to this dead boy.



Think About

How would we respond to the emotionally distraught widow? Elijah's response here in this trial is the ideal. Prayer.

“took him out of her bosom”

This would have been a great act of faith for the widow. The picture that is painted here is a grieving mother who is clinging onto the body of her little boy. She now has to let go of him and put him literally in the hands of God. What a test of faith!

“loft”

This was a room above the house. Note the similarities between how Christ says to pray and what Elijah did (Cp Matt 6:5-8).

“cried”

Elijah was a great man of prayer in scripture, so much so that James refers explicitly to him in his epistle (Cp Jas 5:15-16).

*“And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and **the Lord shall raise him up**; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**”*

The words ‘raise him up’ are also used in relation to resurrection (Cp Jn 5:21; 1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 1:10).

This small word really demonstrates a lot about Elijah's character. Although he seemed resolute and able to hold it together amongst those who were suffering during trial, when he is in privacy and the company of his God, he is able to honestly and emotionally pour out his thoughts. He seems to come across in the record as being very blunt and detached from those around him, but despite these personality traits, he brings that same honesty and bluntness in an emotional connection with his God. Here were people who were “unclean” and not part of the nation of Israel, yet he had grown emotionally attached to them because of their faith in him as a man of God.

During a time when Israel had rejected Yahweh, he had found company in those outside his nation that acknowledged him as a man of God. Now, in the current circumstances, this too was being questioned, so he pours out his heart to his God in a plea for help. Sometimes those who are not openly emotional and are reserved are those who in the company of their God unroll their heart before him like Hezekiah (2 Kings 19v14).

“hast thou also”

This phrase clearly demonstrates the kind of relationship Elijah had with his God. Elijah was confused as to why God would allow this to happen. He had done everything that he had been commanded to do and yet God still brought about trials in his life. He is able to be honest with his God and ask him why these things were happening. It seems Elijah knew why this was happening, but he still asks the question because this is how he felt.

There are a number of critical elements in this prayer.

- Elijah realises that God is in control.
- Elijah approaches God in Faith – Cp Jas 5:15-16; Matt 21:22.
- Elijah has communication with God.
- Elijah prayed about what was on his mind at the time.

**Think About**

How Elijah demonstrated this relationship with God throughout his life. Do we have this same relationship with God? How might we improve our relationship with Him?

“heard the voice”

It seems obvious that God heard Elijah’s prayer but it emphasises the power of prayer. God wants to save and he wants to deliver from the dead but he also wants us to express this to him in prayer. He will hear the prayers of those who desperately turn to him for help when everything seems out of their control.

Although God would have heard him on the previous 2 occasions, God wanted to develop his character and really demonstrate that this was his hearts desire. God will always answer the effectual fervent prayer of the one who seeks him out in desperation. Although his answer may not be on the first time that we pray to him, as would be demonstrated again during Elijah’s life, he hears the prayers of all those who turn to him in the hopelessness of their situations.

“Now I know”

The woman’s faith was now complete and the convincing factor was the resurrection. Even so it is with us; the Lord Jesus Christ died that we might live but the fact of his resurrection convinced all that God was indeed working. It is only by our identification with Christ, with his life in the waters of baptism and having that righteousness attributed to us which belongs to him and which is available through our faith, that we can be identified with the Lord of life and so live everlastingly.⁵

The faith of this widow is also seen in Hebrews 11:35. Note that only two women received their dead to life again in the Old Testament, those being the widow of Zarephath and the Shunamite woman under Elisha.

“the word of Yahweh in thy mouth is truth”

Not only was the woman fully convinced by the resurrection of her son that Elijah truly was a man of God, but also that everything he had said must have represented truth. The nation of Israel was in a state of apostasy yet here in the land of Gentiles, the very centre of Baal worship and the home town of Jezebel, the prophet Elijah had come and with him the blessings from God.

⁵ Christadelphian Scripture Study Service Notes

Section Summary

After a period of time, God sends another trial and causes the widow's son to become sick and die.

The widow, in her confused state, blames Elijah for this evil and questions whether this has come about because of a past sin.

Elijah takes the son from her to his upper room where he cries out to God for help.

Elijah lies the boy on his bed and stretches himself out on him 3 times while praying.

God hears Elijah's prayer and revives the child.

Elijah gives the widow back her son and she proclaims that he is a man of God and speaks the words of truth from the LORD.

Discussion Group Questions

How did this event test Elijah's and the widow's faith?

Why would God send such a trial on them?

How does the widow's accusation demonstrate a natural response of confusion and desperation to trial?

What does her reasoning for this trial demonstrate how she thought God operated?

What does Elijah's response teach us about helping others through trial?

What does this teach us about seeking for help during trial rather than seeking for answers?

How does Elijah's quick response in taking it to God in prayer demonstrate his close relationship with God?

What can we learn about the passion and honesty in Elijah's prayer?

How does God encourage us by providing events in our life that demonstrate his faithfulness as a basis of believing him in the future?

How does this story teach us of the power of prayer?

Further Study



Explore

There are many types in this narrative (v17-24). See if you can find any of the following:

The death and resurrection of Christ.

The widow as a type of the disciples.

The Widow of Zarephath Story	The Lord Jesus Christ

“Wilderness Time” Planner

In our modern busy life it is easy to feel like we don’t have time for a lot of things. It is true that we “make time” for the things we feel are important or enjoy. It is important to plan God into every part of our lives. Consider your commitments during the week and plan time where you can spend “wilderness time” in developing a relationship with God.

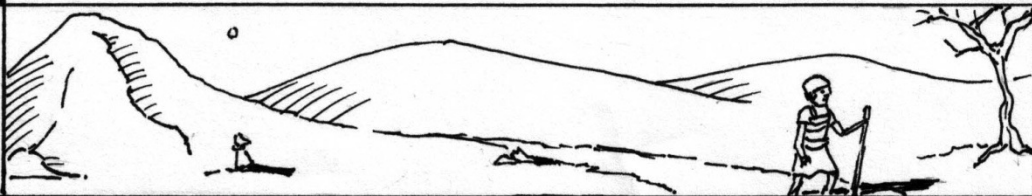
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ELIJAH MEETS OBADIAH

SESSION 2
1 Kings 18:1-16

Becoming A Servant



Overview for Session 2

1 Kings 18v1-16

It has been 3½ years since Elijah pronounced a drought on the nation of Israel (Cp Jas 5:17; Lk 4:25) and now Yahweh is about to send him back to confront Ahab once again. The time is right for Israel to turn back to God and the physical and spiritual drought it has endured would come to an end.¹

In this session we find Elijah as a man quite disdainful of his brethren and sisters living in Israel at the time. His attitude was narrow-minded and self-righteous. He saw no one else in the nation as his brethren or sisters and saw himself as the only true believer left in the Land. Repeatedly throughout 1 Kgs 18 Elijah gives the distinct impression that he believes that he alone has the Truth and the rest of the nation is apostate (Cp 1 Kgs 18:8, 22; 19:10,14; Rom 11:2-4).

In this session we will see how Yahweh works through the righteous Obadiah to show to Elijah that he is not the only one left in the Truth, and in doing so highlights to us the necessity of understanding difference in implementing the principles of the Truth and not judging one another.

Chapter Breakup

V1-2 - God sends Elijah to Ahab.

V3-6 – The faithfulness of Obadiah.

V7-16 – Elijah meets Obadiah.

Themes to Look Out For

Being changed by faith - allowing faith to mould our thoughts, words and actions.

Not judging one another.

Developing a servant mentality.

¹ Deut 32:2; Jn4:7-14

Part 1 - God Sends Elijah to Ahab

1 Kings 18:1-2

“And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria.”

“after many days”

Throughout the narrative of Elijah's life, there is a sense that everything has been carefully and calculatingly measured by the living God. Everything was happening according to His time frame.

“the word of the LORD came to Elijah”

Elijah is the instrument that God is working with in order to turn Israel around. This faithful prophet was visited by God through either a vision or perhaps an angel. Similar events to this occur throughout the record of Elijah's life (Cp 1 Kgs 17:2,8; 19:5,7).

“in the third year”

It was actually 3 years and 6 months (Cp Jas 5:17).

“Go, show thyself unto Ahab”

This is another challenging thing that Yahweh asks Elijah to do. For Elijah to present himself before Ahab in natural terms would mean certain death. Elijah needs to have faith that Yahweh will protect him in this. Note also that it was absolutely necessary for Elijah to show himself to Ahab as a demonstration that the power of God would be channelled through him. It would be on the basis of this identification ('according to my word', 17:1), that the promise of rain would come.



Think About

When Elijah returned to Ahab he had been fed and watered for the last 3.5 years. Others in the same situation would be suffering malnutrition and doubtless many would have died. Think about the impact a perfectly healthy Elijah would have had upon a king who himself was feeling the effects of drought.

“I will send rain”

Elijah has been away from Israel for the last 3.5 years and presumably has had nothing to do with the nation during this time. It appears Elijah has a 'distaste' for the people (Cp 1 Kgs 18:8, 22; 19:10,14; Rom 11:2-4). Yahweh has the task in this chapter of bringing Elijah to the realisation that he should pray for rain because the nation was ready to change, for rain was to come at Elijah's word.

Throughout this chapter Yahweh gives Elijah a number of indications that the nation was ready to change. These can be seen primarily in the way Obadiah responded to Elijah in relation to the negative way Elijah treated him (1 Kgs 18:9, 43), and also in the fact that Israel killed the prophets of Baal and acknowledged Yahweh was God (1 Kgs 18:39-40). This was ample evidence for Elijah to know Israel was prepared to change and hence for him to pray for the drought to end.



Explore

Consider the following verses. What was rain a symbol of and how is this symbol used in the time to come? Deut 28:12, 2 Sam 23:4, Psa 72:6.



Think About

Christ is to come as a spiritual rain. This was also the purpose with Elijah who upon appearing to Ahab was to break the spiritual and physical drought. No Elijah, no rain.

“Elijah went”

Elijah actions again demonstrate his obedience to God.



Think About

How would you treat someone who was going to turn back to the Truth? Pessimism? Harshness? Negativity? Pass premature judgement? Did Elijah really believe Israel had changed? How would Elijah treat Obadiah? How should we treat someone that is trying hard to repent from their previous ways or who has left the truth to follow a selfish life only to repent several years later?

“Samaria”

The name means a watch mountain or watchtower.²

Those in Samaria had neglected their duty as watchmen to Israel and there was no one left in Samaria to stand up and discern right from wrong (Cp Mal 3:18).

Yet instead “they all slumbered and slept” (Mt. 25:5) and failed to detect the rapidly approaching “sword” of drought, nor did they “blow . . . the trumpet” to warn of looming judgement (Ezek. 33:6). The Divine blade soon arrived and devoured the kingdom, leaving just waste in its wake. Therefore, applying these lessons to ourselves, let us not fail in our individual spiritual duties, for we have each been “set [as] a watchman unto the house of Israel” (Ezek 33: 7). So let us then be occupied in the “patient waiting for Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5), “and so much the more, as [we] see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).³

Note also that the drought was not only in Samaria, but in all Israel and the surrounding kingdoms. Samaria however, was the focal point as it was from this city the Kingdom was ruled by Ahab and Jezebel.

² Easton’s Bible Dictionary

³ Whitehouse, S. The testimony: Lessons from the life of Elijah, January 2005

Section Summary

Elijah is commanded to show himself to Ahab.

Elijah obediently goes to show himself to Ahab.

Discussion Group Questions

How might we also show obedience to God in our lives?

How should we treat someone that is trying hard to repent from their previous ways or who has left the truth to follow a selfish life only to repent several years later?

Part 2 - The Faithfulness of Obadiah

1 Kings 18v3-4

“And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly: For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took a hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)”

“Governor of his house”

Obadiah held a very important position in the ‘house’ of Ahab. It is quite similar to the position Joseph held in Egypt (Cp Gen 39:4-5; 41:40).

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Obadiah		

In the first part of 1 Kings 18 we see that Obadiah was entrusted with half of the remaining military livestock in Samaria and was expected to ensure their survival. This task would not have been given to any ordinary servant within the kingdom of Israel.

Being the governor of Ahab's house, Obadiah found himself in an extremely privileged position, especially in the time of severe drought. He was a believer and was held in honour by his master without compromising the truth.



Think About

There are a number of other characters throughout scripture who were in a similar position of honour and yet served Yahweh. Think about how the following people lived the Truth like Obadiah:

Joseph	David
Daniel	Esther
Nehemiah	Mordecai

“feared the LORD greatly”

Note that Obadiah feared Yahweh greatly from his youth (v12). It is never too early to start fearing Yahweh.

“Jezebel cut off the prophets of Yahweh”

The word ‘cut off’ in the Hebrew means to cut a covenant (Cp Gen 15:17-18) and is frequently used in relation to sacrifices. It appears therefore that Jezebel did not merely cut the prophets off from living in the land, rather, she offered them as sacrifices to her god. The saints of Yahweh were offered as sacrifices to Baal!

This is the first mention in scripture of the saints suffering at the hands of a civil authority.⁴ This is yet another allusion to Jezebel being likened to the Roman Catholic Church (Cp Rev 18:24).

“by fifty in a cave”

Obadiah's faith and consistent attitude before Yahweh maintained from his youth was equally matched by his courage. Although having such a prominent position in Ahab's court and



Think About

How might we also show the same courage and conviction towards the truth in our lives today?

⁴ Whitehouse, S. Lessons from the life of Elijah: “Go show thyself unto Ahab”. The testimony Jan 2005

right under the eye of Jezebel, he was able to hide the prophets.
These prophets could well be those mentioned in Hebrews 11:38-39:

“(Of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:”

“Fed them bread and water”

Obadiah ministered to the needs of these men which was typical of his character. He was a servant (Cp 1 Kgs 18:9,43). Note the relationship to Christ as the great servant (Cp Heb 4:15; Isa 40:11).

Obadiah risked his life in this endeavour. If Jezebel had found out he'd harboured these 'criminals' (and her offerings to Baal) he would have been killed.



Application

Working for and being in close working proximity with Ahab and Jezebel meant that Obadiah found himself in a very precarious and difficult position. It is a testament to his faith that he still lived the Truth and gave it his full commitment.

We can sometimes become apathetic towards the Truth and our commitment to it wanes. The dangerous thing is that we can tend to justify our lack of commitment based on our 'difficult' situations.

Consider your commitment in terms of:

- Attendance at the memorial meeting, bible class, Sunday evenings, youth group etc...
- Preaching activity – personal and ecclesial
- Caring for or visiting the sick, fatherless and widows
- Working on developing your character

Obadiah didn't justify a lack of commitment by using his difficult situation as a reason, rather he was 100% committed to the Truth and doing the things of faith which was evident in all his actions.

How can you improve on your commitment towards God and the Truth?



Think About

We can learn so much from the life of Obadiah including:

- Caring for our brethren (Phil 2:20).
- Giving from our plenty to help others (Mark 12:42).
- Giving 100% commitment to God (Luke 14:26).
- Fearing God greatly from our youth in a godless world (1 Tim 4:12).
- Putting ourselves out for our brethren (Matt 25:40).
- Taking on the servant mentality (Matt 25:21).
- Being given to hospitality (Rom 12:13; Tit 1:8).
- Honouring worldly rulers (1 Pet 2:17).

How can we use faithful examples like Obadiah to model our own behaviour?

When we take into consideration the tragic circumstances of a drought and project this into the scene of Obadiah's work, we begin to appreciate what an enormous amount of faith this man of God exhibited.

What was required for Obadiah to feed and water these prophets during a severe drought? How was he able to provide for them in the face of Ahab and Jezebel?

1 Kings 18v5-6

“And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.”

“horses and mules”

Under the law it was forbidden for kings to multiply horses to themselves (Deut 17:16) for the reason that they were excellent in war. However, when it came to war, Israel were to trust in the ability of Yahweh, not the ability of horses (Deut 20:1).

This appears to be a last ditch effort by



Think About

Obadiah's position would be like the head of a national Army. He has been given the responsibility of overseeing the mechanical capability of half maneuverable units in the army (such as tanks and jeeps) to ensure the country's future security. It would be highly unlikely that this task would be given to an insignificant person. This comparison might help us get a grasp of the kind of authority and status Obadiah may have had in Ahab's government.

Ahab to save himself. His trust was in the 'flesh'. Obviously there had already been losses of horses and mules and Ahab needed to fortify himself against any nation that may decide to invade. This is all Ahab was interested in, saving himself. He gave no thought to the flock of Israel, but only to his flock of mules. He was a disastrous shepherd. While his horses were fed, the people went hungry. Compare and contrast Jn 10:1-10; Psa 23:2; Isa 40:11; Ezek 34; Matt 25:32; 1 Pet 2:25 with this concept.



Application

During difficult times it is easy for us to start making provisions for ourselves rather than trusting that God will provide. When might these times be and how might we trust in God rather than trusting in ourselves?

“Divided”

Ahab and Obadiah parted company. The record seems to give emphasis to the fact that they divided company in the phrases ‘the way’. Neither Ahab nor Obadiah went the same way. Passages such as the following come to mind:

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3).

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor 6:14).

Ahab was in the broad way that leads unto death, while Obadiah was in the narrow (or congested) way that leads to life (Cp Matt 7:13-14; Gen 3:24; Ex 23:20; Prov 6:23; Rev 2:7). Spiritually, these two men were walking in different directions.

It is also significant that Yahweh revealed Elijah to Obadiah first as though He gave some recognition and support to the cause of the man who had acted so faithfully even under the threat of Jezebel’s wrath.

Section Summary

Description of the nation's drought.

Ahab was affected by the drought.

Obadiah's faith is highlighted.

Obadiah and Ahab look for water in different directions.

Discussion Group Questions

Obadiah was an extremely righteous man who overcame many of the impediments to his faith. In personal and ecclesial life, how could you practically outwork:

Caring for our brethren (Phil 2:20).

Giving from our plenty to help others (Mark 12:42).

Giving 100% commitment to God (Luke 14:26).

Fearing God greatly from our youth in a Godless world (1 Tim 4:12).

Putting ourselves out for our brethren (Matt 25:40).

Taking on the servant mentality (Matt 25:21).

Being given to hospitality (Rom 12:13; Tit 1:8).

Honouring worldly rulers (1 Pet 2:17).

Part 3 - Elijah Meets Obadiah

1 Kings 18v7-8

“And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah? And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.”

“in the way”

Elijah and Obadiah were walking the same path. They met on the same way and unlike Ahab, Obadiah was walking in the same spiritual direction as Elijah. Elijah however, at this point, does not see Obadiah as being in the same ‘way’ as himself.

**Explore**

“The way” is often used throughout scripture. It is not only related to a physical direction of travel, but is often used as a comment on someone's spiritual direction. Explore this phrase within scripture (particularly in Proverbs 1-9) and comment on how this relates to the significance of the parting of ways between Ahab and Obadiah

“knew him”

Elijah had been away from Israel for 3½ years yet he was still recognisable. His clothing may have given him away (Cp 2 Kgs 1:6-8). Note also that all Ahab's men knew what Elijah looked like (Cp 1 Kgs 18:10).

“fell”

Despite having some kind of worldly reputation and standing, Obadiah collapses in reverence and humility at the prophets feet (Phil 2v7).

**Explore**

The phrase “fell on his face” is only used 7 times in scripture. In the spaces below, briefly outline the context in which it is used and what character the person is displaying.

Abram (Gen 17:3)

Joshua (Josh 5:14)

David (1 Sam 20:41)

Mephibosheth (2 Sam 9:6)

Jesus (Matt 26:39)

Leprous man (Luke 5:12)

“My lord”

Even though Obadiah worked for Ahab, he had no real allegiance to him. Rather, Obadiah aligns himself with Yahweh and Elijah, His servant. Hence, Obadiah calls Elijah his Lord as opposed to Ahab.

The word ‘Lord’ is the Hebrew word ‘*Adon*’ and means sovereignty and lordship and hence is a sign of the utmost respect (Cp Gen 18:12).

“I am”

Elijah is extremely aloof from Obadiah here. Note in the Hebrew that Elijah replies with one word, ‘I’, Elijah is abrupt and very emphatic.

“Thy Lord”

After Obadiah has humbly come before Elijah, prostrating himself on the earth before him in an act of total reverence and respect, it appears that Elijah dismisses him as not worthy to be his brother and is quite harsh and unsympathetic.

“Just imagine for a moment how Obadiah would have felt when he heard Elijah refer to Ahab, this evil king, as his “lord”. Obadiah had greeted Elijah with an opening remark of respect, “my lord”, yet the prophet responded by informing him who his lord was. Had Elijah misjudged the tremendous spiritual qualities of this man? Had he been too hasty in judgement? Is this view confirmed when we bring to mind what Elijah would later declare at Sinai to his God: “I, even I only, am left” (19:10)?

The lesson we sadly draw from this episode is that, occasionally, even the most noble and eminent amongst the servants of God fail to maintain the virtues for which they had once been distinguished: “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).”⁵

Stop and imagine the scene here. Elijah is on a mission to Samaria to confront Ahab the apostate king, on his way he is met by Obadiah with all fancy clothing of the royal household and doubtless an entourage of servants. Is it any wonder Elijah immediately passes judgment on Obadiah and classes him too as apostate? Yet, Obadiah was in the Truth and Elijah was hasty in passing judgment to a man who could have been a great ally in the truth.



Application

The Lord Jesus Christ said “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt 7:1). This is a simple commandment, yet it is one that is so difficult to live by. We make immediate judgements in many areas of our lives based upon what we see. Elijah was the same in this situation. He saw Obadiah working for the apostate King and hence immediately aligned him with that apostasy.

⁵ Whitehouse, S. “The Testimony: Lessons from the life of Elijah, February 2005

Have there been situations in which you have judged someone and have been found to be wrong?



Think About

Obadiah implemented the Truth in a way that perhaps may make us feel uncomfortable. He worked for Ahab. Would you? How would you feel about your brethren and sisters who thought differently to yourself? The principles of the Truth need to be implemented in our lives, but how we do that can differ.

1 Kings 18v9-14

“And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid a hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me. And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him today.”

Obadiah's words to Elijah show a heart-wrenching plea for his life. Throughout this passage he refers to himself as Elijah's servant and that Elijah is his Lord as opposed to Ahab. He tells Elijah of his faith and of his love for him and for Yahweh. And yet, at the end of it all Elijah responds in an extremely negative manner by using the militant title of God in relation to this brother who only wanted some compassion and understanding.



“Slay me”

This highlights to us the severity of the drought insomuch as Ahab recognised Elijah as the cause of it and wanted him at any cost. If Obadiah was

Think About

Think about the following passages and whether Obadiah's situation could have been used as a basis for the remarks.

- Matt 10:38-42
- 1 Thess 2:8-12

known to have been with Elijah and not to have brought him back to Ahab, he probably would have been killed.

“As Yahweh thy God liveth”

This is Obadiah’s expression of faith. Again it is a clear recognition of Yahweh as the God of Israel. It also reveals a clear understanding of Elijah’s association with that God.

“Nation or kingdom”

As discussed in the background to these notes, the kingdom of Israel was at its most politically powerful under Omri and Ahab and therefore had strong ties with the surrounding nations, particularly Zidon, Jezebel’s home kingdom. Ahab was therefore able to request or demand assistance in looking for Elijah during this time.

Barnes says the following concerning the oath:⁶

“This is expressed in the style of Oriental hyperbole. What Obadiah means is: “there is no nation nor kingdom, of those over which he has influence, whither the king has not sent.” He could scarcely, for example, have exacted an oath from such countries as Egypt or Syria or Damascus. But Ahab may have been powerful enough to expect an oath from the neighbouring Hittite, Moabite, and Edomite tribes, perhaps even from Ethbaal his father-in-law, and the kings of Hamath and Arpad.”

“carry thee wither I know not”

The phrase, “The spirit of Yahweh shall carry”, is only used on a few occasions. Those being 2 Kgs 2:16 in relation to Elijah being taken away by a whirlwind and in Ezekiel when the prophet was taken by the spirit of Yahweh to different places (Cp Ezek 3:12,14; 8:3; 11:1,24; 43:5).

“was it not told thee”

There was no sense of pride in Obadiah telling Elijah about the prophets he’d helped save, rather it was a plea for Elijah to understand that Obadiah’s allegiance was to Yahweh and not to Ahab.

1 Kings 18v15-16

“And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him today. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.”

“the LORD of hosts”

Elijah’s response was cold and uncompassionate towards Obadiah’s challenging situation. All Obadiah wanted was some love, compassion and understanding and all he got was Elijah calling on the militant title of God.

Note also that this is the first time that Elijah has used this title. Until now, Elijah has only used Yahweh Elohim (Cp 1 Kgs 17:1,14,20,21).

⁶ Albert Barnes notes on the bible – Non-Christadelphian

**Explore**

What does Yahweh of hosts mean? What does it show about Elijah's response to Obadiah? Use the following quotes as a basis.

Joshua 5:13-15

1 Samuel 17:45

Isaiah 1:24

Romans 9v29

What does this show about Elijah's response to Obadiah?

"I will surely show myself to him today"

This is an oath made by Elijah that he would indeed present himself before Ahab. It therefore gives Obadiah the impetus to go to Ahab with the news of Elijah.

This also shows to us that since Elijah was prepared to make the oath, he believed implicitly that what Yahweh had told him to do, would in fact happen.

**Explore**

Any oath that is made is done so on behalf of God and hence they are very serious things. To break one's oath is to therefore deny the power of Yahweh. Outline what the following verses say about oaths.

Deut 6:13

Deut 10:20

Heb 6:13-18

Matt 5:33-37

Eccl 5:1-6

“Obadiah went”

In a spirit of meekness Obadiah goes to Ahab with the confidence that Elijah would indeed present himself. By this action Obadiah is leaving Elijah in no doubt as to where his loyalties were. Obadiah:

- Believes what Elijah is saying.
- Understands the implications of an oath.
- Is a servant of Elijah.
- Has shown that he is not a servant of Ahab.
- Is prepared to trust in God’s protection.

Note that from this point on there is no direct mention of Obadiah, yet we know that he is in the record in the background for it is he who brings both Elijah and Ahab together, it is also likely that it is he who is present when Elijah prays for rain in the latter part of this chapter (Cp 1 Kgs 18:12, 43).



Think About

It is quite possible that Obadiah resigned from his position as governor over Ahab’s house and hence Ahab’s servant and changed to become Elijah’s servant.

We only know of one servant of Elijah in the whole record concerning him and that is Obadiah.

Obadiah took on the roll of a servant to Elijah yet he was a high ranking official in Israel at the time. He was a great man of faith and the utmost humility.



Explore

It was through the actions of Obadiah, not Elijah, in which unity was reached between these two brethren. Hence, the concept of developing a servant mentality is extremely important.

What does it mean to be a servant? Cp Acts 20:19; 1 Pet 5:5

Obadiah acted like the model servant in every instance he is mentioned in Scripture. Consider the following:

Ahab’s employee – How did Obadiah display the character contained in the following passages?

Eph 6:5-8

Col 3:22

1 Cor 7:21-22

Elijah's servant – How did Obadiah display the character contained in the following passages?

Rom 6:16-18

1 Tim 6:1-2

How did Christ display this servant attitude?

Phil 2:7

Isa 42:1; Matt 12:18

Jn 13:5-14

Using a concordance to aid you, how did the following characters display a servant attitude? Give examples.

Moses (Cp Ex 14:21)

King David (Cp 2 Sam 3:18)

The Apostle Paul (Cp Titus 1:1)

James the Lords brother (Cp Jas 1:1)

The Apostle Peter (Cp 2 Pet 1:1)



Application

Being a servant goes hand in hand with humility. How can you use the examples of faithful characters in Scripture to help you model a servant mentality in your life?

Give examples of how you can show this attitude in your personal and ecclesial life.

Section Summary

Obadiah and Elijah meet.

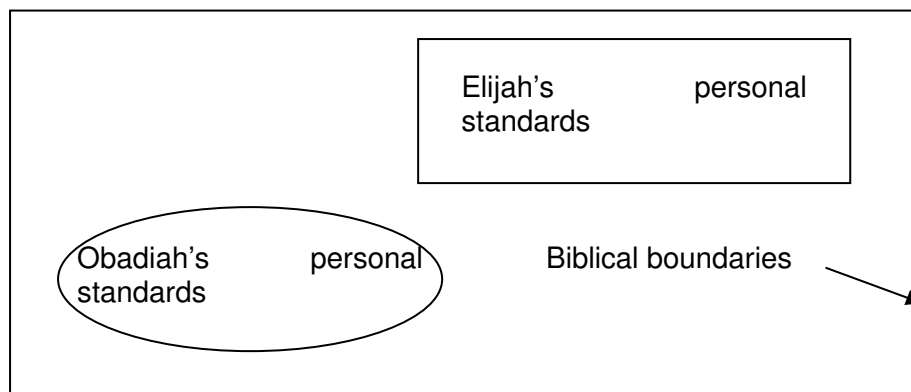
Elijah tells Obadiah to go back to Ahab and tell him that Elijah has been found.

Obadiah pleads with Elijah for some understanding.

Elijah makes an oath that he'd go to Ahab.

Discussion Group Questions

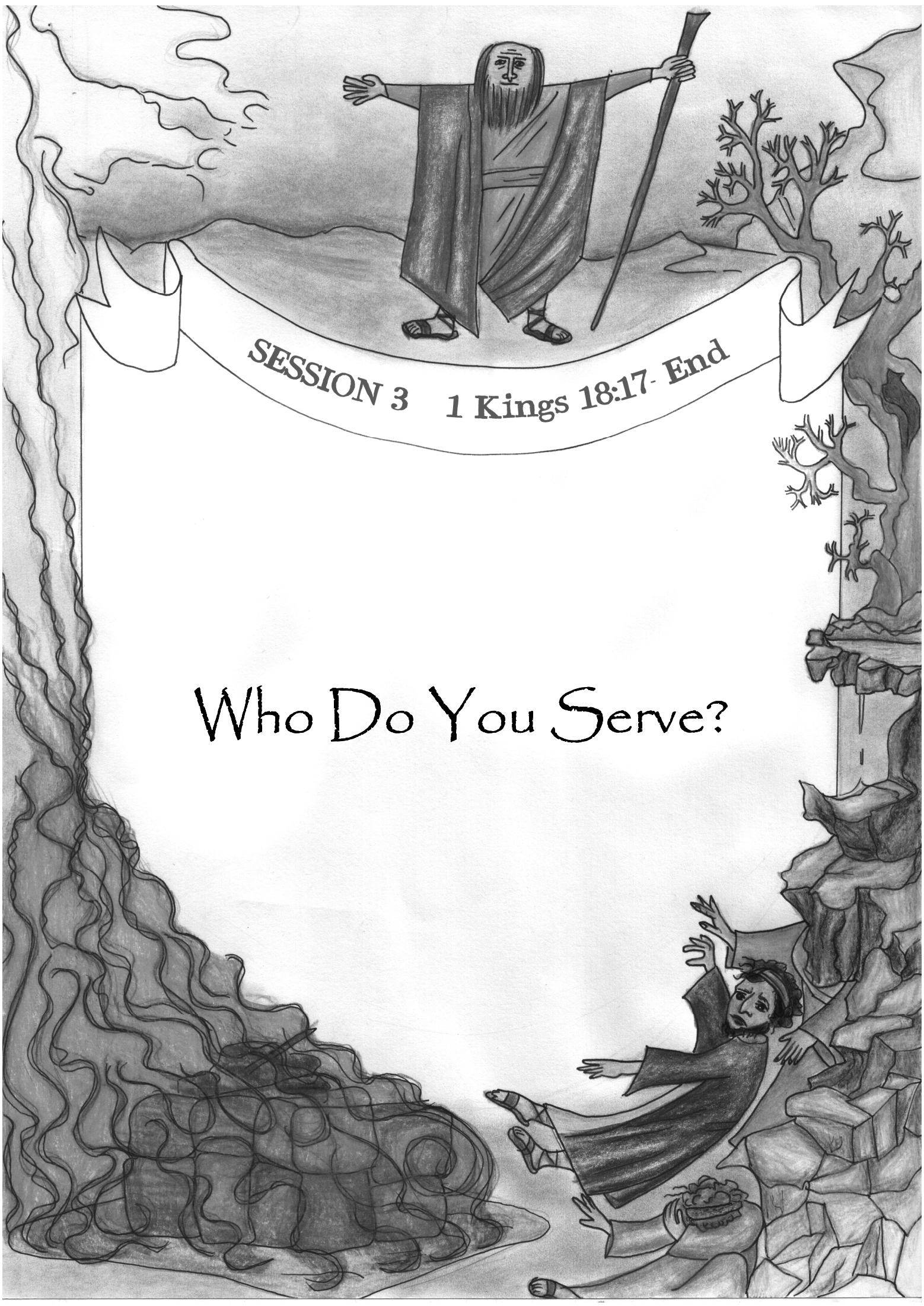
Obadiah and Elijah implemented the principles of the Truth differently, yet both were righteous. Discuss the implications of this using the following graphical analogy.



The Lord Jesus Christ said not to judge. Why? What were the implications of Elijah judging Obadiah? How does this relate to our everyday life?

Unity came between these two brethren because Obadiah had a servant mentality. What does it mean to be a servant? How does being a servant bring unity? Think about the greatest unifying event in history, the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Servant.

Elijah was aloof or distant from the needs and circumstances of Obadiah. What is the importance of connecting with our brethren and sisters on an emotional level so that we don't react negatively as Elijah did?



SESSION 3 1 Kings 18:17- End

Who Do You Serve?

Overview for Session 3

1 Kings 18v17-46

Upon Obadiah informing Ahab of Elijah's existence, Ahab quickly comes to meet and confront him over the drought. A drought for which Ahab blames Elijah.

In this session we will see Yahweh victorious over the lifeless Baal, and the nation of Israel which had previously turned aside from following Yahweh, is now ready to turn back.

We will also look in detail at Elijah's prayerfulness and draw on the many lessons we can apply to our lives today.

Chapter Breakup

V17-18 – Elijah's announcement to Ahab

V19-25 – The terms of the contest

V26-29 – Baal's failed attempt

V30-40 – Yahweh is victorious

V41-46 – Elijah prays for rain

Themes to Look Out For

Effectual, fervent prayer – Making prayer meaningful.

Principles of the atonement – Our reconciliation to God based on the saving work of His Son.

Who do we serve? – Halting between two opinions. If God is anything in our life He has to be everything.

Part 1 - Elijah's Announcement to Ahab

1 Kings 18v17-18

“And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.”

This is the scene where truth meets error, Elijah meets Ahab and Yahweh meets Baal.

“Art thou he”

Note that there is no love lost between these two foes. There is no greeting from Ahab but only an insult.

“troubleth”

The Hebrew word is “akar” and means to disturb or afflict. It can refer to a clear liquid that is stirred up and becomes muddied.

Ahab was the real troubler of Israel, not Elijah. The same was said about the believers in Thessalonica, yet it was Paganism that had turned God's moral values upside down, the believers were merely wanting to restore God's principles (Cp Acts 17:6).



Explore

The Hebrew word for ‘troubleth’, Akar, is only used 14 times in scripture, 4 of which are in relation to Achan's sin in Josh 6-7. Achan's name itself is a derivative of it.

Consider the passage of Josh 7:20-26 and note the similarities with Ahab.

Ahab uses Joshua's words in threatening Elijah. What did Joshua say was to happen to Achan? What does this say about Ahab's threat to Elijah?

How were Achan and Ahab's sins so similar? (Cp Josh 7:21)



Application

Ahab saw Elijah as a troubler because he brought in scriptural principles as the basis for how the nation ought to have been living. He obviously didn't like this. Perhaps his conscience was pricked?

Sometimes we can get annoyed with people who bring our mind back to the Bible and show us openly that perhaps some of the things we do or want to do may be inconsistent with living the Truth. We might even label them negatively as 'goody goodies'.

Elijah was trying to turn Israel around just like our friends do with us. Will we respond to scriptural rebuke the same way as Ahab, or will we accept it as guidance from God Himself? Will we call those who rebuke us a troubler when we do wrong?

“forsaken”

This was a massive mistake on Israel's behalf for when they were with Yahweh, Yahweh would be with them but if they forsook Yahweh, then He would forsake them (Cp 2 Chron 15:2).

“followed Baalim”

Moses and others declared that Yahweh was the only God, (Deut 4:39; Isa 45:5; Joel 2:27) and yet Ahab has forsaken him and followed Baal. Note that the Hebrew here clearly shows that it is not just one singular Baal, it is plural. Ahab served multiple Baals.



Explore

Baal was the primary god of the surrounding nations. What was this god all about? What were the main beliefs that accompanied Baal worship?

Use a bible dictionary or encyclopedia to find out who Baal was and what he did. What beliefs accompanied his worship?

Use a bible dictionary or other similar reference book to find the different kinds/forms of Baal and note down what each of them are.

Write a brief summary of Baal worship.

What is ironic about the drought Israel now finds itself in with regards to Baal worship?

Section Summary

Ahab confronts Elijah over the state of Israel.

Elijah confronts Ahab over the state of Israel.

The reason for Israel's dire circumstances can be traced back to their following Baalim.

Discussion Group Questions

How do we respond when scriptural principles are laid before us when we may be doing something wrong?

What was the similarity between Achan's and Ahab's sin. What does it tell us about the state of Ahab's apostasy?

In a modern day context, what could be likened to Baalim?

Part 2 – The Terms of the Contest

1 Kings 18v19-20

“Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel.”

“gather to me”

Throughout this chapter, Elijah's focus is on Israel and Judah being brought back together. When he uses the phrase 'gather to me' there is a clear link with the first time this phrase is mentioned in Scripture. This was in the blessing of Jacob on his 12 sons when he called them all together (Cp Gen 49:1). Did Elijah want to bring Israel's attention to what Jacob said, particularly in terms of Judah?

*“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the **gathering of the people** be” (Gen 49:10).*

Interestingly it will be the work of Elijah in the future that will bring both Israel and Judah back together under Christ (Shiloh). Elijah will bring Israel (scattered Jewry) back to their brethren so they can be united under by Christ in the Land. This appears to be where Elijah's mind is throughout his dealings with Israel. This is considered in detail in session 6.

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Shiloh		

**Explore**

Throughout this passage Elijah continually refers to Israel being joined back together. This is Elijah's work in the future, but in part he undertook it during his mortality. Consider the following passages and comment on how they show that this is Elijah's desire.

1 Kgs 18:31

1 Kgs 18:33-34

Lev 9:5 (note context of the chapter)

Mal 4:5

“Mount Carmel”

Most commentators agree that Carmel is a very fertile place, in fact, it is known for its abundance of fruit trees. Josephus even calls it a fruit garden. Carmel is not simply one mountain but rather a range of mountains that jut out into the Mediterranean Sea. Picture the scenery that such a place would offer and consider the stark contrast to what confronted Israel in this traditionally fertile place. Desert...

By Elijah bringing Israel to Carmel it is likely he was highlighting to them that:

- The drought was extremely severe and Yahweh had caused it.
- Baal and Ashtoreth, as gods of fertility, had failed.

“prophets of Baal... groves”

In all there were to be 950 prophets, the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the groves who ate at Jezebel's table. It appears however that only the 450 prophets of Baal were present at Mount Carmel (Cp 1 Kings 18:22). We are not told why the prophets of the groves were not there, however it is likely that all those who turned up halted between two opinions, the prophets of Jezebel worshipped Baal and only Baal.

“Ahab sent”

Why did Ahab send for all Israel and also all the prophets of Baal? He is the King and answers to no-one, why now does he listen to an eccentric man wearing only a leather girdle? There may have been some doubt in Ahab's mind as to the reality of Yahweh vs Baal.

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1 Kings 18v21

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”

“halt”

The Hebrew means to hop or skip over and in this context it is hopping between two opinions. The ASV translates this passage as “how long go ye limping between two sides” while the LXX translates it “how long go ye lame in both knees.” The same word is used of

the 'leaping' on the altar by the Prophets of Baal indicating that they would be going one way and then another. Easton¹ says it indicates a lame, uncertain gait, going now in one direction, now in another, in the frenzy of wild leaping. Hosea 7:10-11 compares the nation of Israel to a silly dove in going back and forth between Assyria and Egypt.

Israel were not 100% for either Yahweh or Baal.



Explore

There are many exhortations throughout scripture that we need to be 100% committed to God. And not be 50% for 'Baal' and 50% for God. Scripture is clear in relation to 'halting between two opinions'. Consider the following passages. What are the lessons we're being taught in them? To what do these passages relate?

Matt 6:24

2 Cor 6:14-18

Rom 6:16-22

Jas 1:6-8

What does the phrase 'halting between two opinions' mean to us?

Why is the bible so forthright in preventing/stopping this condition?

¹ Easton's Bible Dictionary

What can you see are the problems with ‘having a bet either way’?



Application

Consider the following questions:

What is it that takes up our time – are we guilty of the same things as Israel?

What kind of service does God want from us?

How can we overcome the temptations that draw us away from God?

How did God say to deal with Baal's prophets?

Do you think you have been guilty of halting between two opinions in the past like Israel?

Do you give God 100% commitment in your home and ecclesial life?

A great hope

Israel had forsaken God, yet God doesn't leave them. Rather, he allowed them the means of coming back to him. It was their response to this invitation that was the critical issue. The same is true of us.

1 Kings 18v22-25

“Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.”

“I, even I only”

Elijah's attitude toward Israel was very negative to the extent that he believed that he was the only one left who was faithful to God, and certainly the only prophet. (Cp 1 Kgs 19:10,14).

Elijah found out about the prophets Obadiah saved only 9 verses earlier and had obviously not taken on board what Obadiah had said about them.

Note also the contrast between Baal's prophets and Yahweh's prophets. 450:1. The odds are stacked against Elijah.



Application

Elijah's mission was to turn Israel back to God, and yet, because they had followed Baal he treated them very harshly. It was for this reason that Elijah was replaced by Elisha. He was too harsh and judgemental.

When we have dealings with people either in or out of the Truth who believe wrong doctrine how do we deal with them? Consider the words of Paul to the ecclesia in Thessalonica (2 Thess 3:13-16)

Are we trying to prove the person wrong? Or,

Are we trying to save them?

Do we count (deem, reckon, consider) them as a brother? Or,

Do we count them as an enemy?

'let us therefore'

Elijah's mind is here taken directly back to Lev 9 when the first offerings under the law were made. Elijah wants to bring Israel back to the start of their religious worship as a nation.



Explore

There are a number of similarities and allusions to Lev 9 in this chapter, particularly in relation to the offering of the bullock and Yahweh's response. Note down some of the similarities.

1 Kings 18	Leviticus 9

Although Elijah's mind appears to be focused to these events in Lev 9, he omits one crucial thing. What is it? Hint: It is in verse 23. What does this tell us about Elijah's attitude toward Israel?

Speaking of this portion of Leviticus, consider the following summation:

The spiritual lessons are clear. God's spiritual priests, those "in Christ", are called to a life of continuous activity in His service on behalf of others so that they might be found "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).²

Like Israel at the tabernacle, Elijah wanted Israel at the altar to take on the same attitude of 100% commitment to God.

“bullock”

This was the national sin offering (Lev 4:13-21) and was referred to as the whole burnt offering. It too speaks of total dedication to Yahweh. (Cp Lev 1:8; Deut 6:5; Psa 51:19; Mk 12:33; Rom 12:1). Elijah was acting as mediator on behalf of Israel.

“answers by fire”

Again this is paralleled with Leviticus 9 indicating where Elijah's thoughts are and that he was wanting Israel to dedicate themselves 100% to Yahweh's service.

Note too that Elijah saw Yahweh as a God of fire and judgment. This is addressed in greater detail in session 4.

“Choose you”

Elijah is giving the prophets of Baal every possible advantage. He wants Israel to truly see that Yahweh was in fact the only God and was able to overcome Baal in any situation possible even when it advantaged Baal beyond comprehension.

The advantages Elijah was giving Baal were as follows:

- Baal was the sun god therefore fire should not be a problem for him.
- Given first choice of a bullock.
- Given the opportunity to have full use of the midday sun.

² Mansfield. H. P. *The Christadelphian Expositor: Leviticus*, Logos Publications

Section Summary

Elijah challenges Israel as to who they serve.

Elijah challenges the Prophets of Baal to a contest.

The Prophets of Baal are given every possible advantage.

The terms of the contest were made.

Discussion Group Questions

What is it that takes up all our time?

The Lord Jesus Christ said that you cannot serve God and mammon. The Apostle James said that a 'double minded man is unstable in all his ways'. Is there anything in your life that you would find hard to give up for Christ?

What kind of service does God require?

How can we overcome the temptations that draw us away from God?

Do you think you have been guilty of halting between two opinions in the past?

How can we give God 100% commitment in our home and ecclesial life?

How do we treat people who are not in the Truth or who have wrong doctrine? What was Paul's instructions regarding this?

Part 3 – Baal's Failed Attempt

1 Kings 18v26-29

“And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.”

“O Baal, hear us”

Literally the Hebrew means “O Baal answer us”

This is reminiscent of the Ephesians in Acts 19:34 crying for the space of two hours “Great is Diana of the Ephesians”.

It is also important to bear in mind that in our prayers vain repetition is meaningless and ineffectual.

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking” (Matt 6:7).

“no voice”

Like the idols in Psa 115:4-9, Baal was exactly the same. He was the work of men's hands, he has no eyes, can not speak, hear or smell. The psalmist concludes his remarks with the following words:

“They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them. O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield” (Psa 115:8-9).

Israel should see that Yahweh is their protector. He is the one who could protect them from all forms of disaster – even drought (Cp Deut 11:17; 28:23; Lev 26:19).



Application

Is our prayer to God meaningful or is it filled with words we don't understand or clichés that mean nothing to us. This is what Matthew calls 'vain repetition'.

There is nothing wrong in repetition of prayers (Lk 18:2-8) or repetition in prayers (Cp Psa 107:8,15,21,31), the problem comes when the repetition is meaningless or empty.

Ask yourself the question about how you pray. Do I use the same phrases over and over? E.g. thanks for food, before I go to sleep at night, ecclesial prayers (are they filled with clichés that don't mean anything to you? Is it 'vain repetition'?) Or, are they meaningful and from the heart?

“leaped upon the altar which was made”**Explore**

using a concordance where else does the word leap occur in this chapter? Compare this altar with the altar that Elijah uses? What was different about the way they were constructed? How is this related to our belief today? What foundations are we basing our faith on?

“Elijah mocked them”

At this point surely the prophets of Baal would have realised that their god was not going to answer (if in fact they believed he would in the first place) and as such should have stopped, however, their sin had blinded them to the obvious.

In Isa 44 the prophet speaks of the blinding nature of sin, in particular with regards to idolatry, so much so that they ‘cannot see’ that there is a lie in their right hand.

“He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” (Isa 44:20).

“cut themselves”

This action was expressly forbidden under the law (Cp Lev 19:28).

There is a story in Ugaritic mythology that Baal died, and it was his father El who cut himself in a state of mourning and anguish to restore his son back to life. Were they, then, attempting to revive Baal’s absent powers?³

“midday was past”

In other words, Baal, as the sun god, was now past his most powerful and if he had not acted until now he would not act at all.

The response of Baal to his prophets was nothing, and *obviously nothing*.

³ Whitehouse. S., (May 2005) *The testimony: The challenge on Carmel* Pg161

Section Summary

Baal is no god.

Baal's prophets try in vain.

Cutting themselves and using vain repetition.

Discussion Group Questions

When we pray, is it meaningful? How can we make our prayers meaningful?

What part does repetition play in prayer?

Part 4 - Yahweh is Victorious

1 Kings 18:30-35

“And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.”

“twelve stones”

This is a highly significant act. It speaks of Israel as one united nation as it ought to be.

**Explore**

The only other times 12 stones are mentioned in scripture are in Ex 24 and Josh 4. Answer the following questions in analyzing these passages.

Josh 4 - What is the context of this passage?

Why were the 12 stones erected?

Where were the stones taken from and what is the spiritual significance of this? Cp Rev 1:6

Ex 24 - What is the context of this chapter?

What did the 12 stones represent?

What was the people's reaction to the law of Yahweh? Cp v3,7



Application

The great work of God in reconciling us to Himself is seen figuratively here in the altar on Mt Carmel. Note some of the parallels below

Altar on Mt Carmel	Christ as our altar
Israel were sinners and needed to be reconciled to God	Mankind needed reconciliation to God (2 Cor 5v19)
The altar was there to declare that God was right as opposed to Baal	God's righteousness needed to be declared (Rom 3v25-26)
The bullock (Christ) was placed on the wood	Christ took on our nature and overcame sin (Heb 2v14) and was hung "on the tree" (Gal 3v13)
Water drenching the altar and round about	We identify with Christ through baptism (Rom 6v4)
Israel acted on their faith by killing Baal's prophets	We live a life of faith seen through our actions (Jas 2v20) when we have identified with Christ

Israel was visibly affected by their reconciliation to God and this renewed relationship with God prompted them to act in faith. Do we have the same conviction when we look at Christ as our altar?

1 Kings 18v36-37

“And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.”

“time of the evening sacrifice”

It is significant that the time of day is noted here for this was the traditional time of prayer in the nation (Cp Psa 141:2; Dan 9:20-21). Elijah now facilitates this practise that has been dead in the nation under the rulership of Ahab and Jezebel.

“Yahweh Elohim of Abraham, Isaac and Israel”

Elijah’s mind in this whole episode is on Israel being one nation in worshipping the true God. It is significant that he refers to Yahweh by his FULL name (Cp Heb 11:16) hence bringing their mind back to the fact that Judah also was included in this, they were all from Abraham.



Application - Principles of Prayer

There are a number of principles of prayer outlined in this passage including:

1. The Length of our prayers

Prophets of Baal = 8-10 hours = ineffectual

Elijah = 2 verses = effectual

Consider the following verses

Ecc 5:2 – NB – whose words is it talking about?

Neh 2:4

Mk 12:40

Matt 6:7

Luke 6:12

Nb: There are also many instances of long prayers in scripture (Cp. Matt 26:36 – 46). However, the critical issue in prayer is attitude.

What is the principle being taught here?

How can you apply this principle to your prayers?



Application - Principles of Prayer

2. Our attitude in approach to God

Elijah approached God as His servant

Consider the following verses:

Matt 6:9

Psa 116:16

Heb 10:19

1 Cor 7:21-23

What is the principle being taught here?

How can you apply this principle to your prayers?



Application - Principles of Prayer

3. Yahweh is totally in control of all events

Elijah realised that the turning of Israel was a work of Yahweh, not himself. Yahweh would send rain when He was ready.

Consider the following verses concerning Yahweh's varied responses to requests in prayer

2 Cor 12:8-9

1 Kgs 3:7-14

Psa 106:14-15

How can you apply this principle to your prayers?



Application - Principles of Prayer

4. Focus on others in prayers

Elijah's focus was not on himself, rather, it was on Israel, a people whom he loved.

Consider the following verses

Luke 22:32

Gen 20:17

Num 12:13-15

2 Chron 30:27

Jas 5:20

When you pray, how often do you think about other people? The next time you pray, try thinking of other people before yourself and identify specific things you could pray for, for them. You will find your prayers much more meaningful.

1 Kings 18:38-39

"Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God."

"fire of the LORD fell"

This was an answer to prayer. This gives us further indication of Elijah's faith.

James tells us that faith is an integral part of any prayer.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jas 1:5-8).



Explore

God had answered by fire on 3 prior occasions in accepting sacrifice. What happened in each of the occasions and what does this say about God's acceptance of the sacrifice? Why did He accept it?

Lev 9:24

1 Chron 21:26

2 Chron 7:1

“the LORD, He is the God”

The Hebrew is almost identical to Elijah’s name (Elijah = my God is Yahweh). It has been suggested by some commentators that perhaps Israel had missed the point and in fact they were not worshipping God, but rather were idolising Elijah.

1 Kings 18v40

“And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.”

“slew them there”

This was done according to the law (Cp Ex 22:20; Deut 13:5).

Elijah’s reaction to God’s response to prayer was immediate. How would we react to this response? Would we bask in our triumph or immediately set to work in God’s business?

Elijah’s character here is one of zealotry for Yahweh. In fact the word ‘jealous’ in 1 Kgs 19:10,14 is the exact same word as is used for Phinehas in Num 25:13. Bro Stephen Whitehouse says the following:⁴

Under the Law the responsibility of executing such judgement fell primarily to the sovereign authority. But Ahab, the king of Israel, had been corrupted; he himself was an idolater, so it fell to Elijah to be the law-enforcer. Yet a precedent had already been established when Phinehas slew Zimri and Cozbi (Num. 25:8). What did the Spirit record of Phinehas? That he was “zealous [qana] for his God” (v. 13). And how wonderful that Elijah would later use virtually the same expression of himself: “I have been very jealous [qana] for the LORD God of hosts” (1 Kgs. 19:10,14).

⁴ Whitehouse. S, (August 2005) *The Testimony: Thou has turned their heart back again* Pg312

**Explore**

God is a God of love and is not willing that any should perish. How are these actions still right?

Why did God want the prophets of Baal killed?

What is the implication for us in our spiritual lives?

Section Summary

Elijah calls the people near to him so they could see exactly what was going on.

Elijah creates an altar of unhewn stones which was to symbolize Israel and their way back to restitution with God.

Elijah makes sure that the only thing that would make the altar effective was a miracle.

Elijah prays to Yahweh a fervent and effectual prayer.

Yahweh responds to Elijah's prayers by a miracle in sending fire.

Israel turn back to God.

Discussion Group Questions

How were Israel brought back to God through the work of Elijah? What about us through Christ?

Why do you think Elijah made sure that the altar was drenched with water?

On Mt Carmel Elijah's sacrifice was consumed by fire. As a result, did Elijah seek glory from the people? No! His purpose was that Israel might know that Yahweh is God.⁵

When doing something for a friend, your ecclesia or youth group, what is your motivation for doing it?

Is the natural reaction of the flesh to give glory to someone else?

Why does God require us to give glory to Him and not take it to ourself? Provide scriptural examples to support your reasoning.

How effective are your prayers?

What does the narrative of Elijah and other passages in scripture tell us about the length of prayers?

How can we show that we believe that God is in control of everything?

Why do you think it's important to focus on other people when praying?

Elijah's sacrifice on Mt Carmel moved Israel in such a way that they desired to 'cut off the flesh with its affections and lusts'.

When we look at the sacrifice of Christ, are we willing to 'take up our cross and follow him' in *all* aspects of our life?

Does God's reconciliation of man to Himself move us in a way that forces us to act?

⁵ Adapted from the 1995 Manitoulin Youth Conference study notes on Elijah www.youthconference.com

Part 5 – Elijah prays for rain

1 Kings 18v41-46

“And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.”

“Get thee up”

It appears that Ahab, being present here, sanctioned or at least agreed with the killing of the Prophets of Baal and hence Elijah sees that Ahab has made the first steps toward changing and ridding the nation of Baal worship. It is for this reason that Elijah sends him back to Jezreel to dispose of Jezebel with the same zeal he has shown with the Prophets of Baal. Elijah doesn't want his enthusiasm to wane. This is why he also runs back to Jezreel before Ahab's chariot. Elijah wants a total change in the nation.

“a sound of abundance of rain”

The LXX translates this verse “there is a sound of the coming of rain” hence telling us that the rain was not actually heard literally at this point (Cp v43-44) but was yet in the making. Elijah had absolute faith that when he prayed for rain Yahweh would send it.

**Application - Principles of Prayer**

We have no record of what Elijah said in his prayer on top of Mt Carmel, but we do have some critical principles of prayer demonstrated in what he did that demonstrate to us how we can make prayer powerful in our lives.

5. Thanksgiving for the blessings we obtain is essential in prayer

After defeating Baal's prophets, Elijah prayed

Consider the following verses

Ezr 3:11

Col 3:17

Heb 13:15

2 Chron 30:27

Jas 5:20

We also need to bear in mind that we need to be thankful even for our trying circumstances. (Cp 1 Thess 5:18)

How can you apply this principle to your prayers?



Application - Principles of Prayer

6. Making time to pray apart from distractions is essential

Elijah went to the top of Mt Carmel to pray

Consider the following verses

Matt 14:23

Matt 6:6

What is the principle being taught here?

Why do you think this is important?



Application - Principles of Prayer

7. Our mind and body should be in alignment in our prayers and reflect how we're feeling

Elijah prostrated himself on the ground in prayer

There are many instances of prayer in the bible that don't fit the 'conventional' position we often use. Consider the following verses

Isa 38:1-8

Psa 30:2

Neh 2:4

Eph 3:14

1 Tim 2:8

Mk 14:35-36

NB – In addition to posture, our attitude is critical. Prayer at any time, at any place, in any posture, when it is engaged in with the right attitude, is acceptable.

How can you apply this principle to your prayers?



Application - Principles of Prayer

8. When we approach God we need to be humble not proud

Elijah's posture indicates humility in bowing to the earth with his face between his knees

Consider the following verses

Ezra 9:6

Lk 18:13

Jas 4:6

How can you apply this principle to your prayers?

In what ways can you show humility in your prayers?



Application - Principles of Prayer

9. Persistence in prayer until it is answered is essential

Elijah prayed 8 times for rain

Put yourself in Elijah's shoes:

He prays a 2 verse prayer to defeat Baal's prophets in a dramatic way only a few hours earlier, and now has to pray 7 times with no response. Would you continue to pray even if there was no response?

Consider the following verses

Luke 18:1-8

Isa 62:7

1 Thess 5:17

Rom 12:12

Eph 6:18

Psa 55:15-16

Christ asked if he would find 'the faith' on the earth that continues in prayer even when those prayers are seemingly unanswered. Do you have this kind of faith? Do you continue in prayer?

How can you apply this principle to your prayers?

Section Summary

Elijah sees that Israel and Ahab have turned.

Elijah goes to pray for rain to come to the parched land with his servant (Obadiah?).

Rain comes via a small cloud forming over the Mediterranean sea.

Elijah runs back to Jezreel before Ahab's chariot as a sign of respect and to spur Ahab on to depose Jezebel from power.

Discussion Group Questions

When we pray, what role should thanksgiving for the blessings we receive play?

What are some ways that we can make time to pray to God?

Why is humility so important in prayer?

When Jesus says will he find *the faith* on the earth its in relation to persistent prayer. How often do we pray for something persistently?

Prayer forms a large part of this chapter and Elijah gives us some great principles on which to model our behaviour in prayer.

Discuss the following concepts

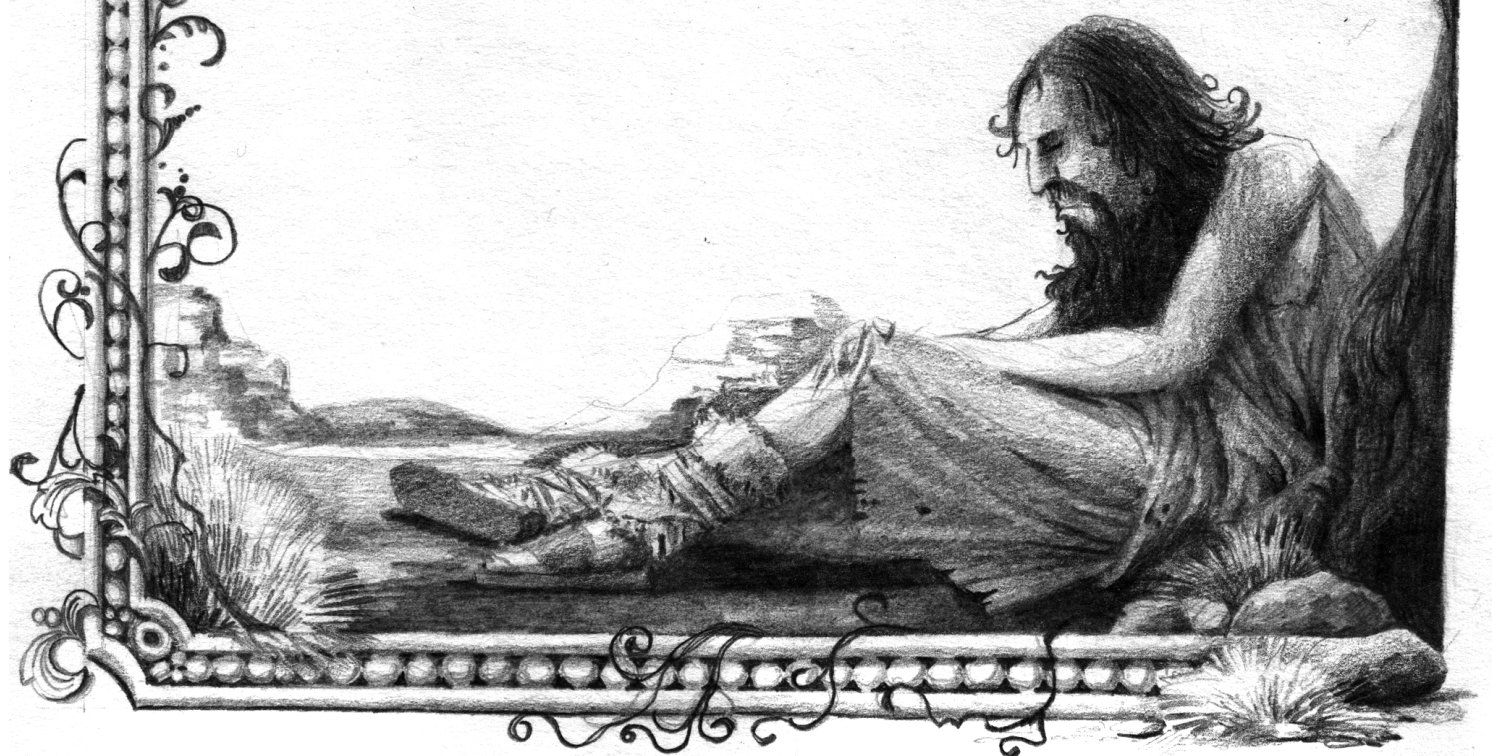
- The role of faith in prayer.
- The length of prayers.
- Approaching God as a servant.
- Accepting God's response to our prayers.
- Praying for others.
- Giving thanks in prayer.
- Praying in good times and in bad.
- Our posture during prayer.
- Humility in prayer.
- Persistently praying for something and not giving up.

What role does prayer play in your home and ecclesial life? What are some positive ways that you could incorporate prayer into each?

Elijah had an emotional connection in all his prayers and as a result it was not something distant to him. How can you make your personal and ecclesial prayers meaningful for yourself and the whole ecclesia?

SESSION 4
1 Kings 19:1-18; 2 Kings 1

God Developing Us For The Kingdom



Overview for Session 4

1 Kings 19 & 2 Kings 1

Life in the Truth is all about changing who we are so that we become more like God. The Apostle Paul calls it a transformation of our mind (Rom 12:2 – *Roth* = be transforming) because this change must first be internal, and then reflected externally.

In this session we will look at the changes God wanted to make in Elijah's life, particularly in relation to changing his *destroy mentality* to a *save mentality* and also his *pride* into *humility*. As we will see however, Elijah had a free will and God would not force him to change, it had to be something that Elijah wanted to do. In this session we will find that even though Elijah did not change straight away God still does not leave him. How do we respond to God trying to change us?

Another major theme in this session is depression. Elijah suffered from it as do a number of other people in the Truth today. How can we deal with depression if we suffer from it and how can we help people who suffer from it? God's guidance in these matters will be considered in this session.

1 Kings 19 - Chapter Breakup

V1-2 – Jezebel's threat to Elijah.

V3-8 – Elijah's trip into the desert.

V9-14 – Elijah's motives questioned .

V15-18 – God's command to Elijah.

2 Kings 1 - Chapter Breakup

V1-8 – The sin of Ahaziah.

V9-12 – Elijah condemns the army.

V13-18 – Elijah's condemns Ahaziah.

Themes to Look Out For

Depression – God's guidance in dealing with depression.

Thinking to save, not to destroy – Where is our motivation when dealing with people we're trying to turn to the Truth?

God working in our lives – Do we respond to the way God works in our lives?

Part 1 - Jezebel's Threat to Elijah

1 Kings 19v1-2

“And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.”

Elijah has arrived back in Jezreel on a high. He has seen the nation turn again to Yahweh and assist him in killing the 450 prophets of Baal. In anticipation for the overthrow of Jezebel and Baal worship, Elijah runs the fastest marathon in history back to Jezreel before Ahab's chariot to encourage Ahab to follow through with the overthrow of Baal. To Elijah's dismay however, things turn sour as soon as Ahab confronts Jezebel.

“Ahab told Jezebel”

It is clear from scripture that the real leadership in Israel came from Jezebel and not from Ahab. Ahab merely played the role of a figurehead and was a very weak king (Cp 1 Kgs 18:4, 19, 21:8, 11, 14).

Think about what it was exactly that Ahab told Jezebel. He told her *all*.

- Irrefutable proof that Yahweh won the contest and Baal lost including:
 - Prophets of Baal dancing around their altar.
 - Cutting themselves.
 - Baal's prophets praying all day.
 - Elijah's simple prayer and dousing of the altar in water.
 - Yahweh's answer to Elijah's 2 verse prayer.
- Elijah's command that the prophets of Baal be killed.
- The people's reaction to Baal and Yahweh. Baal is no god, Yahweh is God.

It is interesting to consider the emphasis however that Ahab put on his words. Note that it is “all that *Elijah* had done” with specific mention of the killing of Baal's prophets. Ahab knew that this was all a work of Yahweh, and yet, when he stands before his evil wife he says that it was a work of Elijah.

“Jezebel sent a messenger”

In the context of Elijah being given overwhelming support by all Israel on Mount Carmel through the deposing of Baal's prophets, Jezebel is giving Elijah an ‘out clause’. Why does Jezebel send a messenger to Elijah to threaten him? She is the Queen and has killed many of God's faithful followers in the past. Why does she now not kill Elijah but rather send a messenger with a threat?

It is probable that she recognised that the people had turned to Elijah and were all behind him. It would be political suicide to kill him now with such a following. Jezebel recognised this fact and made an empty, yet effective threat.

“So let the gods”



Application

We can learn a lot from Jezebel's boasting.

“Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov 27:1).

“Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings (arrogance – NASB): all such rejoicing is evil” (Jas 4:13-16).

In what situations would you apply this principle of not boasting?

Why do you think this is such an important principle? Provide scripture to support your response.

Section Summary

Elijah runs before Ahab's chariot back to Jezreel.

Ahab tells Jezebel everything that happened on Mt Carmel while Elijah waits outside for the news that Jezebel has been deposed.

Elijah receives word that Jezebel wants his life and he runs away.

Discussion Group Questions

How did Elijah fail in his response to Jezebel?

What does it mean to have unswerving faith?

If you were Elijah in this situation, how would you react? How should Elijah have reacted?

What are the principles that we learn about boasting from Jezebel? How can we apply this in our lives today?

Part 2 - Elijah's Trip into the Desert

1 Kings 19v3

“And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.”

“he arose”

RSV = He was afraid.



Explore

In every instance recorded in Elijah's life, whenever he moves it is also accompanied with either prayer or direct guidance from God. Consider the following passages and note down what they are talking about.

1 Kings 17:2

1 Kings 17:8

1 Kings 18:1

1 Kings 18:46

2 Kings 1:15

2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6

Isa 51:12-13 – note the similarities with Elijah's experience

Why do you think Elijah didn't react how he normally would in this situation?



Application

There are many passages throughout scripture that talk about not being fearful.

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee (Psa 56:3).

And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm (Matt 8:26).

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love (1 Jn 4:18).



Kingdoms of Israel and Judah 924 - 722 BC¹

Think of a number of situations in your life where you have needed to apply this principle. If you did, how did you apply it, if you didn't, why not? How could you apply it in the future? e.g. preaching at work, school or uni.

“Beer-Sheeba”

Elijah could not have reached this place until at least 2-3 days after Jezebel threatened him. It is approximately 150Km to Beer-Sheeba from Jezreel and one days journey equated to approximately 60Km.

¹ American Bible Society (source www.e-sword.net.au)

Beer-Sheeba is also the southern most point in the combined kingdoms. It is as though Elijah wanted to get as far away from Jezreel as possible.

From this point, Elijah is to travel into the wilderness. Note the similarities between Elijah and Jeremiah when faced with the same emotions (Cp Jer 9:2).

“left his servant”

This was quite possibly Obadiah (Cp 1 Kgs 18:12).



Explore

Elijah is not thinking rationally at this point. It is obvious that he is going through the first signs of depression. Where are the following signs of depression found in the record of Elijah? To complete this explore, consider verses 3-14.

Body rejects new information

Separation from a good relationship

Focusing on himself

Self-pity

Thinking that there is no way out (tunnel vision)

Loss of options

Unrealistic fear

Distorted thinking

Fatigue

Exaggeration of his position



Application – Spotting the warning signs (Turning the tide of suicide, Rose Education)

If the underlying reasons for depression are not looked into, it is more likely suicidal thoughts will be acted upon. The common signs for suicide and depression are similar. Depression is often characterised by:

- Lack of concentration
- Small attention span
- Mood swings
- Feeling sad all the time
- Self blame
- Feeling worthless, hopeless, helpless
- Tiredness and a lack of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Changes in performance
- Inability to make decisions
- Aggressive, negative behaviours
- Physical – aches, sleep and appetite changes

Elijah suffered from many of these and yet God intervened in his life when he needed Him most. We need to be attuned to our fellow young people and brethren and sister's needs and emotions like God was with Elijah, and help them through their trials.

1 Kings 19v4

“But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”

“into the wilderness”

Elijah is on a journey to Horeb here (Cp v7) but doesn't get more than 1/10 of the way there before collapsing in a depressed heap and requesting death from God.

“that he may die”

Elijah is at this point irrational. In verse 2 he went from Jezebel for his life, and now he's requesting that his life be taken from him.



Explore

Elijah saw no way out of his trial and as a result, asked for God to end his life. This is a sensitive issue; however, scripture gives us guidance when dealing with it. There were only 8 people who committed suicide (or wanted to) in scripture. Consider the following verses and note down who and what the verses are talking about.

1 Sam 31:4-5

2 Sam 17:23

1 Kings 16:18

Matt 27:5; Acts 1:18

The above characters didn't see any other opportunity for escape in their situation. Consider the following passages in relation to overcoming these thoughts.

Job 3; 7:1-3; 10:18-20

Jer 20:14-18

Jonah 4:8-9

.....

1 Kings 19v5-6

“And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.”

One of the beautiful things about being a disciple or potential disciple in Christ is that God never gives up on us. Even if we've failed in certain areas, God still wants to work with us in order to bring us into the kingdom. The case with Elijah is no different and in fact provides us with some assurance that God in fact **wants us** in the Kingdom.

In this scene we find Elijah fatigued and would be left to die alone in the desert were it not for God's intervention and care.

“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:7).

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister (Gk = attend or aid) for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb 1:14).

“arise and eat”

This is a massive trial for Elijah and it is one that God recognises. In the other situations where Elijah has requested to be taken out of a particular trial (e.g. at Cherith) he has been greeted with another trial in its stead. On this occasion God recognises that Elijah is in a very fragile state and perhaps could not endure another trial and therefore comforts and nurtures him.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13).

How could you practically outwork the following three things with a person who is suffering from depression? What do you think each entails?

Helping with immediate needs

Being there in comfort

Wise communication

This was the start of a process in turning Elijah around and bringing him out of his depression. Seldom do people just ‘snap out of it’. God realises this and worked with Elijah for perhaps another 10 years to bring him out of his depression and to turn him around to be the person He wanted him to be when he departed in 2 Kings 2.

ELIJAH - DEPRESSION AND SUICIDAL THINKING

(By Sis Chris Burney - Mt Barker)

God had asked Elijah to show himself to Ahab to tell him that it would rain. His subsequent interaction with Obadiah showed him that Israel was sadly lacking spiritual leadership and his prophets lived in fear of their lives. Had he thought of supporting Obadiah and the prophets to take back their spiritual authority and lead the people back to Yahweh? The people were ambivalent in their attitude and Jezebel's prophets held the balance of power. Fuelled in his zeal for Yahweh, Elijah determines a contest between himself (I alone am left) and the prophets of Baal. This was not what God had initially charged him to do but God is with him and backs him up in a most spectacular way on Carmel and the people responded to it by demonstrating that they had made up their mind about who was the true God. In his response to Jezebel he couldn't see that he allowed her to disenfranchise him so that he couldn't return to play a key part in bringing the whole nation back to God by valuing the potential that the people had demonstrated. It was like he lit the spark of hope in people but because he couldn't see the flickering ember; he missed the opportunity to fan it into flame. The reality check came when Jezebel showed that she was not impressed by his show of power and his victory became a distant hollow echo in his mind as he collapsed before a woman who could command fear even without her presence. He therefore empowered her to continue to terrorize Israel by his fearful reaction. God did what Elijah wanted when He responded with the fire that he asked for on Carmel but this was not part of God's bigger plan for Elijah and Israel. God wanted Elijah to see that even those whom Elijah thought to be spineless and apathetic were holding their own against idolatry by not succumbing to it and He wanted them to be given the opportunity to serve Him.

Elijah fled to Beersheba (150 kms) on a non stop gruelling 3 - 4 day journey, left his servant there and continued on alone (God's hand was not "on him" this time as it was when he ran before Ahab's chariot). Overwhelmed by fear and hopelessness he sinks into depression. Was he intent on going to Horeb right from the start and realized that this time God wasn't with him? Had he already decided that he would rather die than spend his life as a fugitive in the wilderness? He was exhausted from the initial journey and now he purposefully travelled further into the desert without food and water till his body collapsed. He then asked Yahweh to finish the job because he saw himself as an incompetent leader, a dismal failure and of no further use to Him, deserving to have his carcass rot in the wilderness like that of his forebears. The downward spiral of depression was complete as he sank into a welcome state of unconsciousness not only because he was physically depleted and emotionally drained but because he could now escape into the blackness of oblivion and not think or feel anymore. Someone who wants to end their life is in intense emotional pain which exceeds their ability to cope and they cannot see past what seems impossible in the present. They just want it to stop and there seems to be only one way out. Elijah was angry with Jezebel, Ahab and the people and angry with himself for not being able to effect change in the way he wanted. Depression is anger suppressed and or denied and turned inward so that it disables a person's ability to reason clearly; engage emotionally and makes them unable to perform normal everyday tasks. One person's view of what it was like for them when they felt suicidal - "my world collapsed around me and I felt that I was a total failure; I lost my faith and I was tired of living; I had no conscience and believed that I had no purpose in God's eyes and I was of no worth to Him." When Elijah thought he was finished, then God was just beginning.

The way that God works with Elijah is a wonderful model for us of how we can support each other through the most difficult times. God's way is totally contrary to the way that most of us would react. Being in the presence of someone who is depressed and can only talk negatively can really try your patience. You just want to shake them and tell them to snap out it and get on with life! And what's more, you want to tell them that they have no right to be talking about taking their life because it's God's gift and He decides that when the time comes! Is this the way God responds to

Elijah? At no time does God ever judge him. God understands Elijah's fears, disappointments, grief and isolation and now begins a process of teaching Elijah where his real power lies and helps him to rebuild his self-confidence. The first thing God does is allow him time to recover and then builds his physical strength by providing him with life essentials so close by that he hardly has to move to reach them. God's infinite patience and love is demonstrated through the words of the angel who shows Elijah compassion as he prepares Elijah for taking such a long journey to Horeb so that he will not be overcome by fatigue. Nurturing and caring for someone who is depressed without making any demands on them is the first step. Was this where God wanted him to go or was it where Elijah had decided to go? Perhaps there was a joint purpose as God set a process in motion for Elijah's recovery. Part of that joint purpose was to permit and encourage Elijah to go to the place where he could personally commune with God just as Moses had done when he too had been "alone" as the leader of Israel. Perhaps Elijah thought that here was the place where he could find the God of Judgement that he imagined could destroy the evil in Israel. But he needed to find out that the God of Israel was not seeking to destroy but to save. Luke 9:56

"What are you doing here Elijah?" is God's invitation to Elijah to talk about what is consuming his thinking and stirring his emotions to the point of blocking out all else. God doesn't point out the flaws in his logic or put down his feelings but rather through a quiet whispering voice tries to reach out to him and show him that this is not the end of the road but the beginning of what can be accomplished with His people. He gives Elijah a hope for the future. God was in control despite what Elijah thought and there was still much for him to accomplish. He gives Elijah some positive things to do in anointing Hazael, Jehu and Elisha and a reassurance that these men won't let anyone get away with anything. Elijah was given a team of powerful and significant individuals to teach him that there were others that could do God's work as well as he could and that he didn't need to go it alone anymore.

Allowing someone who is depressed to talk about what is bothering them and how they feel and listening without criticizing or minimizing what they are going through is what God did with Elijah. Saying the same thing over and over as Elijah did is a sign of trauma and being stuck in that loop means that a person cannot see beyond his own pain and suffering as he relives his bad experiences because he cannot see any light at the end of the tunnel. Elijah was frightened, alone and on the run and desperately wanting some reassurance. God knew his single-minded devotion and passion for Him and did not want to crush his spirit but rather to channel his passion for Him. He demonstrated through gentle words that there was another way out. Likewise, we can help someone by giving them back their hope in life. In a gentle caring manner we can acknowledge their fear because we all have times in life that we find scary. We can encourage them by identifying what they have already done or have been doing that has worked for them and help them to recognise the strengths that they have. Elijah's strength was his ability to take action and get things done, so God sought to restore his sense of purpose by charging him with a new mission. However, Elijah was still a work in progress. Although he was impacted by the still small voice he was only just beginning to hear it. He did not go and anoint Hazael and Jehu but went straight to Elisha and in his off-handed almost reluctant anointing of Elisha showed that he was still dealing with his emotional turmoil. What do we learn from this: people don't emerge from depression overnight. The road is a long one and progress is sometimes incremental...two steps forward and one step backwards. Just getting through a day and doing what you have to do can be taxing enough. God brought Elisha into Elijah's life because He knew that Elisha could offer Elijah all the things that he lacked. Likewise the mentoring role that Elijah provided for Elisha helped him to focus outwards and so served the purpose of distracting him from his inward negativity. If you have a friend that is depressed, hang in there with them even if they try to push you away, ignore you or put you down. Your natural reaction may be to feel hurt, offended and rejected but remember that their reaction is

all part of their illness and your caring, patient response will mean more than you can possibly know. You may have been provided for them by God to support them through this difficult time.

Recognising the warning signs and risk factors of depression:-

- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Showing signs of sadness, hopelessness, irritability
- Changes in appetite and or weight
- Changes in sleep patterns; sleeping longer or shorter, broken sleep
- Changes in behaviour; becoming withdrawn, agitated or angry
- Loss of energy; tiredness or overactivity
- Making negative comments about themselves
- Low self esteem
- Finding it hard to concentrate
- Talking about hurting themselves

What can you do:-

- Utilize the power of listening without judging
- Show that you care about the person
- Let them know that they are not on their own and ask how you can help
- Stick with them, the cure won't happen overnight
- Know how and where to get professional help

NSW Christadelphian Support Service, Qld. Vic. and SA Christadelphian Care Groups can help. There are links on their websites (see below) to appropriate help agencies. For totally confidential discussion (that means nobody will spread anything about what you say) with a trained contact person or counsellor call one of these numbers:

South Australia 08 8270 4115

Victoria 1800 508 806 (24hr service)

NSW 0407 558 819 (24hr service)

QLD 1800 508 806 (24hr service)

Care Groups home page <http://www.caregroup.org.au>

Chat line (confidential) - <http://www.caregroup.org.au/vic/chatcare.htm>

Beyond blue - <http://www.beyondblue.org.au>

1 Kings 19v7-8

“And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.”

“the journey”

This is the first time that we hear of Elijah making a journey. From these verses however it is clear that Elijah is on his way to Horeb the mount of God. Elijah had given up on the journey, but God still wanted him to go there. God had some very important lessons to teach Elijah.

“40 days”

40 is the number of probation or testing in scripture (Cp Gen 7:4; Ex 16:35; Deut 8:2; Matt 4:2). When Elijah is at Horeb it is a time of testing for him. How is he going to respond to the guidance of God?

When else did someone go without food and water 40 days at Mount Horeb?

“Horeb the mount of God”

It is significant that Elijah goes to Mt Horeb at this time for at Mount Horeb (Sinai) Israel saw the judgement of God and the fear of God was struck into their hearts. It is precisely this that Elijah wanted Israel to see.

Elijah’s whole attitude towards the children of Israel was one of negativity (Cp 1 Kgs 18:8,22; 19:4,10,14). It is interesting to note at this point that when Elijah went to Mount Horeb he went there with the purpose of seeing Yahweh as a God who would or should pronounce judgement and pour out his fury on apostate Israel (note the links between Ex 19-32). In contrast to this however, Yahweh wanted Elijah to see Him as a God of love and mercy and hence guides Elijah’s actions to be almost identical to those of Moses when Yahweh revealed his glory or character to him in Ex 34. This will be explored in greater detail at the end of this section.

Section Summary

Elijah leaves Jezreel and goes straight to Beer Sheeba where he leaves his servant.

Elijah then goes into the desert and collapses wishing for death.

God provides an angel for Elijah and comforts him.

Elijah continues his journey on to Mount Horeb.

Discussion Questions

A major focus in this section is the depression of Elijah. Elijah did not attempt to help himself when in his depression.

- When we are depressed, how can we help ourselves?
- What are some passages of scripture that might be a comfort in times of depression?

God's methodology of caring for Elijah in his depression followed 3 basic steps.

1. Helping him with his immediate needs.
2. Being there in comfort.
3. Counselling Elijah through wise communication.

Discuss as a group what each of these three steps involve?

When we see our friends/family go through depression, how do we act towards them?

What are some practical ways that we could follow God's example here in caring for people who are depressed?

How can we be aware of what is happening in our friends lives so that we can identify if they are depressed or not?

Part 3 - Elijah's Motives Questioned

1 Kings 19v9-10

“And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”

“cave”

Lit. *The cave*.

Note the similarity of Moses being hidden in a cleft of a rock when he was on Horeb and didn't eat or drink for 40 days (Cp Ex 33:22; 34:28).

“What doest thou here Elijah?”

God is not condemning Elijah in these words, rather, He is making him question his own motives. Elijah's feelings about Israel and his understanding of God when coming to Horeb is as follows²:

- Israel was totally apostate
- He saw Yahweh as a God of fire and judgement
- He wanted Israel to fear God

Elijah had a very negative view of Israel and an over inflated view of himself. He was a very proud man in terms of his religious lifestyle. He was also very judgmental towards others because that was his perception of who God was.

Christ's words in Matt 7:1-5 were played out in this scenario down to the finest details. How?

What should our attitude towards each other be?

Are there people that you don't have very much to do with in your ecclesia or youth group because you don't agree with something they may do in their life or you may do things in a different way to them? How can you respond to these situations in a positive way?

How would you think or feel if someone made the same kind of judgement about you as you did of them?

² These issues are addressed in greater detail further on in this session.

Elijah's reaction to the question of why he was in Mount Horeb was one of over exaggeration and one that bore little resemblance to reality. Note the following:

Elijah's Assumptions/Accusations	True/False
He's been jealous	True
Forsaken thy covenant	False - Not all had
Thrown down altars	True
Slain prophets	False - Not all had
I, even I only, am left	False - 7000 remained

Elijah's response that he was the only one left, on two occasions, was one that shows he was in the depression loop (Cp v14).

1 Kings 19v11-12

"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

"stand upon the mount"

This would no doubt have been a frightening experience, as was the case for Moses and Israel just before the law was given in Exodus 19.

*"And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in **fire**: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount **quaked greatly**. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by **a voice**" (Ex 19:18-19).*

Note Moses' reaction to this scene in Heb 12:18-21:

*"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that **burned with fire**, nor unto blackness, and **darkness**, and **tempest**, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, **I exceedingly fear and quake**".*

"Yahweh was not in the wind, earthquake, fire"

This is interesting because these were all events which God caused and therefore Yahweh was in them. However, in themselves they do not show His character. Yahweh is a God of severity *and* goodness, judgement *and* mercy. God is all of these characteristics, including

the still small voice, all at the same time. Only the correct balance is who God is. Hence, God was 'not in the wind, fire or earthquake'.



Explore

The elements of wind, earthquake and fire are elements of destruction. Use a concordance or bible dictionary to demonstrate how scripture uses these elements as symbols of destruction.

Fire

Earthquake

Wind

Elijah's *character* was epitomised in these elements. How do the following instances in Elijah's life show this?

1 Kgs 17:1

1 Kgs 17:18

1 Kgs 18:8,15

1 Kgs 18:18-19

1 Kgs 18:21-22

1 Kgs 18:27

It is this character that Yahweh was trying to mould to be more like His own. That is, more loving and caring towards his brethren.

“still small voice”

The power of God lies in the still small voice (Heb = gentle breeze) of salvation. His purpose is to save, not destroy. This is the lesson that Elijah needed to learn (Cp Lk 9:56).

Elijah needed to stop thinking negatively about the Israelites and start to work with them, like what God was doing with him, and to teach them so that they could avoid destruction. He will do this in the future.

“And he (Elijah) shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal 4:6).

**Application**

We can learn a lot from Elijah's attitude and how it needed to change, especially in interpersonal relationships.

If a person is going through a 'rough patch' in the Truth, how do we respond?

- Is it harsh and judgemental?
- Do we cut them off if they don't respond with our first attempt?
- In our methods of helping them, do we listen to what their needs are or do we have an ideal in our minds that we will only adhere to with little or no flexibility?
- Are we rigid in our approach to dealing with a person's problems?
- Is it in a spirit of understanding (not compromise) to try and help the person back to the Truth?
- Do we try and work with them rather than against them?

Do we use the 'still small voice' of correction or is it the hard hammer of submission?

**Think About**

A 'harsh' approach is necessary in certain situations (Cp Matt 23, Gal 2:11).

How do you think you would be able to know when to implement a 'harsh' approach and when to implement a 'soft' approach?

.....

1 Kings 19v13-14

“And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”

“when Elijah heard it”

This raises the question as to what the voice said. Although we do not know exactly, we can take an educated guess at what it may have been.

It is quite *possible* that Elijah was told similar concepts to what Isaiah says about John the Baptist (who came in the spirit and power of Elijah).

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.... The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever” (Isa 40:1-3,7-8).

This passage in Isaiah is all about changing our thinking from a fleshly way of thinking to a spiritual way of thinking. That's what John the Baptist came to do in Israel. Change their thinking so that they were ready to accept Christ (Cp Isa 42:3).

“wrapped his face in his mantle”

As considered in the following ‘explore’ section we can see that Elijah was identifying himself with Moses on Mount Horeb when he had received the revelation of God's glory. Elijah understood that this is what Yahweh wanted him to see. Yet, Elijah gives the same response. Elijah had the ‘head knowledge’ of what God had said, but he had failed to take on board the morality required (Cp 1 Kgs 19:19).

**Explore**

When Elijah travelled to Horeb he did so with a negative attitude towards Israel and a wrong perception of God. He saw God as a God of judgment. Through a detailed consideration of 1 Kings 19:8-14 we can see that Elijah's mind is firmly placed in the events of Exodus 19-32.

using the table below, outline what each event in Exodus 19-32 is talking about and then relate the narrative of Elijah in 1 Kings 18-19 to these events.

Events of Exodus 19-32	1 Kings 18 and 19
Ex 19v8	1 Kings 18
Ex 19v16	1 Kings 19
Ex 19v18	1 Kings 18
Ex 19v19	1 Kings 19
Heb 12v18-21	1 Kings 19
Exodus 20-23 - Giving the Law to Moses	
Ex 24v4	1 Kings 18
Ex 24v17-18	1 Kings 19
Ex 32v1-6	1 Kings 18/19
Ex 32v10	1 Kings 19

There is a contrast between what Moses does and what Elijah does in Ex 32:11-14. What is it? (Cp Rom 11:2-4).

How does this show to us that Elijah's mind was back in Exodus 19-32? What does this show about his perception of God's character?

In contrast to this, Yahweh is using Elijah's intention to go to Horeb and forcing Elijah into a different set of circumstances so that he can see God's character.

Use the table below to show how God is forcing Elijah into circumstances similar to those in Ex 33-34 when Yahweh reveals his character to Moses (Cp Ex 34:6-7).

Events of Exodus 33-34	Events of 1 Kings 19
Ex 33v12	
Ex 33v18-19	
Ex 33v22 (2 things)	
Ex 34v3	
Ex 34v6-7	
Ex 34v28	
Ex 34v28	

One of the great lessons and encouragements to come out of this is that God will work with us continually throughout our lives in order to develop us for the kingdom. **He wants us in the Kingdom.**

1 Kings 19v18

“Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.”

“have left”

Roth, RV, RSV, ASV translate this as “I will leave”. This indicates that there may have been more at this point in time.

Section Summary

Elijah goes to Mount Horeb.

There, he hides in a cave.

God shows Elijah his destructive power in the wind, earthquake and fire.

Elijah gives God the same pre-rehearsed response that he is the only one left.

God tells Elijah that he is to be removed from his position of prophet.

Discussion Group Questions

Elijah was being corrected by God on Mount Horeb but didn't change immediately.

When we are corrected (or given constructive criticism), how do we respond?

What is the attitude God requires when we are corrected?

God uses a 'still small voice' to correct Elijah. In what ways might we be able to correct a person without making them upset with us?

Elijah had a *destroy* mentality when dealing with Israel. Our life in the Truth is all about following Jesus' footsteps who had a *save* mentality.

When we're trying to turn someone to the Truth, how do we act towards them?

We can be very zealous for the Truth and can easily fall into the trap of seeing people who are different as wrong. How can we avoid acting like Elijah in these situations? Use scripture to support your position.

Part 4 - The Sin of Ahaziah

2 Kings 1v1-2

“Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease.”

It is generally thought that 2 Kings 1 is approximately 5-6 years after the events of 1 Kings 19. In the first part of this session we saw the pride that Elijah had in terms of his religious lifestyle. In this part of the session we can contrast this pride with the humility of one of Ahaziah's captains.

The scene greets us with a new king in Israel, Ahaziah. He followed in the steps of his father Ahab and did the exact same things as he did during his reign.

*“Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. And he did **evil** in the sight of the LORD, and **walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam** the son of Nebat, **who made Israel to sin**. For he **served Baal**, and **worshiped him**, and **provoked to anger** the LORD God of Israel, **according to all that his father had done**” (1 Kgs 22:51-53).*

“Moab rebelled”

Ahaziah was a weak king. Moab was subdued under Ahab and Omri, yet now, Ahaziah was not willing to squash any rebellion.

Many commentators believe that Moab's rebellion was due to

- Ahab's lack of success against the Syrians
- Ahab's death – subsequently the nation was in a weak position
- Ahaziah's ill health – subsequently unable to enforce his rule

“fell down through a lattice”

Even in this we see Ahaziah's continued departure from the Truth. Israel were not to have lattices on the roof for this very reason, rather they were supposed to have a battlement.

“When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence” (Deut 22:8).

“Baal-zebub”

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Baal-zebub		

“Stark observes that “these (the flies), which are governed in their coming and going by all the conditions of the weather, are apparently endowed with prophetic power themselves.” This explains the fact that a special power of prophecy was attributed to this god.”³

³ Keil & Delitzsch's commentary on the Old Testament

Part 5 – Elijah Condemns the Army

2 Kings 1v3-8

“But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed. And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back? And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words? And they answered him, He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.”

“the angel of Yahweh”

This is no ordinary angel, but is the Yahweh Angel. This is God’s personal representative. There are only 6 occasions in scripture where this particular angel tells someone to ‘arise’. Those being:

- Elijah – 1 Kgs 19:5,7, 2 Kgs 1:3
- Joseph – Matt 2:13 – when told to go to Egypt
- Philip – Acts 8:26 – when going to meet the Ethiopian eunuch
- Peter – Acts 12:7-8 – when Peter was let out of prison

Obviously Elijah holds a very privileged position.

“Is it not because there is no God in Israel”

Ahaziah was brought low by Yahweh but still didn’t turn to Him. He had a definite choice as to who he was going to worship. Yahweh is the God in Israel but he chooses to go to the Philistines in Ekron to enquire of their god.

“Elijah departed”

In classic Elijah fashion he gave a harsh message to an idolater.

“It is Elijah the Tishbite”

Elijah was very recognisable in Israel and particularly to the King who was enemies with Elijah. Yet this appearance gives us an indication as to his faith (Cp Heb 11:37).

2 Kings 1v9-12

“Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of a hill. And he spoke unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.”

“captain of fifty with his fifty”

This is a captain in the army of Ahaziah and presumably is a godless man. Many commentators believe that this man came to Elijah with a harsh message from the king and to bring Elijah to Ahaziah for certain death.

**Explore**

What were the characteristics that leaders of 50 were to display? How did these men match up against this criteria? Cp Ex 18:21

“Sending fifty-one soldiers against one prophet is surely an acknowledgement from the king that this was no ordinary man, that Elijah had a power at his disposal which was both extraordinary and terrifying. Does this not remind us of the “band of men and officers” which was sent “with lanterns and torches and weapons” to arrest another righteous man (John 18:3)? Both men challenged the authorities of their day and suffered evil from their own countrymen.”⁴

“Thou man of God”

It is thought by some that this comment is derogatory towards Elijah, however, this inference is not contained in the Hebrew, but rather, in the inflection of voice you may use.

“If I be...”

Elijah only saw these men as messengers of the apostate king and hence had already cast judgement on them before he spoke with them.

“fire from heaven”

Elijah has not changed his attitude towards Israel. The events on Mount Horeb have not significantly affected his character.

The LXX translates this not as a question, but rather as a stated fact saying that “If I am a man of God then fire *will* come down” and devour these men and hence shows to us the absolute trust that Elijah had in Yahweh that he would answer his request.

⁴ Whitehouse, S. The Testimony: Lessons from the life of Elijah: *The death of Ahab and his son*



Explore

Fire has only come down from heaven to devour people on 3 other occasions. Those being:

Sodom and Gomorrah – Gen 18

Korah Dathan and Abiram – Num 16

When Israel complained about the bread they were getting – Num 11

What were the reactions of Abraham and Moses in these situations? How were they different to the reaction of Elijah?

Gen 18:26

Num 16:30

Num 11:2

... Israel had forsaken Him and abandoned themselves to all the abominations of the heathen—not only abominations of worship, but all the abominations that come in their train. Israel had broken the national covenant of Sinai, under which, death and evil were the penalty... Was it out of keeping with such a situation of things that God should show His power in the retributive consumption of the rebels? So far from this, the marvel was that the catastrophe was not extended to multitudes besides, which it doubtless would have been, had not God's further purpose with Israel required the deferring of His anger, as explained by Isaiah 48:9⁵

Any judgement that comes from God is obviously correct.

⁵ Roberts, R. *The visible hand of God* 3rd Ed – Pg378-379 The Christadelphian, Birmingham

Section Summary

Ahaziah takes over the kingship from Ahab and follows in his evil steps.

Ahaziah falls through a lattice and injures himself.

Ahaziah sends messengers to ask Baal-Zeebub about what will happen to him.

Elijah is sent to confront the messengers and Ahaziah.

Messengers come to Elijah on the mount where Elijah calls down fire against them from heaven.

Discussion Group Questions

Do you think it was right for Elijah to call down fire from heaven against these men? Yes/No provide Scriptural evidence.

Do you think Elijah had a destroy mentality in this chapter? Yes/No provide scriptural proof.

Part 6 - Elijah's Condemns Ahaziah

2 Kings 1v13-15

“And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight. And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king.”

Humility is one of the greatest characteristics of a Godly person and yet it is one so alien from our nature. We don't want to be humble, but rather, we naturally want to be proud. It appears Elijah may have had the exact same problem in this stage of his life.

“fell on his knees”

There are several things this man did in order to show his humility to Elijah:

- Fell on his knees
- Besought (begged) Elijah to have pity on him
- Pleaded with Elijah
- Called himself Elijah's servant



Explore

The Lord Jesus Christ talks about losing our life in order to find it. The Captain and his 50 did the same thing here.

In Matthew 16:25-28 what does Christ say about losing ones life?

What is the context of this passage?

What does it mean to be humble?

Think about David in his sin with Bathsheeba. How did he show humility when he accepted his sin? (Cp Psa 51:16-17).

Consider the following extract from the “Genius of Discipleship”⁶ when talking about humility and poverty of spirit.

“Most disciples know about one particular temptation. It could be described as the desire to manipulate our understanding of discipleship so that we may keep the things which ought to be rejected; continue in the way of life which ought to be changed; retain the associations which ought to be severed.”

Is there something in your life that you know you should give up or change but you find it hard to?

Humility is saying to God, You’re right, I’m wrong, I’ll accept what you have said and I will love it and you with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. It’s ridding ourselves of our own self-will. What do you think the opposite of this character would be?

⁶ Gillett, D. *The Genius of Discipleship* The Christadelphian, Birmingham (1992)

Section Summary

The third captain and his 50 come to Elijah.

This captain shows humility towards Elijah.

Due to his humility he was saved from certain death.

Discussion Group Questions

Pride is often contrasted with humility in scripture and this is seen in the attitude of Elijah and the humility of the third 51 of Ahaziah's men in 2 Kings 1.

What does it mean to be humble?

How might you show humility in the following situations? What scriptural principle needs to be upheld in each of these situations?

- Doing the speed limit in your car
- Being honest in a tax return
- When someone tells you that you're wrong
- Knowing that you need to change something in your life but not wanting to e.g. music with immoral lyrics, watching immoral TV shows/movies, using or consenting to bad language

How does pride stop us making the necessary changes in our lives?



SESSION 5 1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2

As Iron Sharpens Iron

Overview for Session 5

1 Kings 19 & 2 Kings 2

This session is all about caring for our friends and developing our friendships with them. How do we look after our friends in both good times and in bad? Do we stick with them or are we only a 'fair weather friend'? Do we help our friends to meet trials in their lives, are we there as support when they need us and do we exhort and encourage them in the way they should live their lives? Do we show them that we love them?

These issues are all found in the relationship we see between Elijah and Elisha. Although the relationship started off on 'rocky ground', the attitude of these two men to serve each other and their God is what made their relationship so strong. The proverb, "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" is so applicable for these two men. It was Elisha, as opposed to any other method, that made Elijah change from the destroy mentality to the save mentality.

1 Kings 19 - Chapter Breakup

v19-21 – Elijah meets Elisha.

2 Kings 2 - Chapter Breakup

v1-6 – Elijah and Elisha's journey.

v7-10 – Elijah and Elisha leave Israel.

v11-12 – Elijah's departure.

Themes to Look Out For

Friendship – How we can develop long lasting and meaningful friendships.

The comfort of God – God's love seen in His guidance in our lives.

Changing who we are – How can we work with God and recognise our failings and seek to change who we are.

Part 1 – Elijah Meets Elisha

1 Kings 19v19

“So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.”

In context here Elijah has been confronted by Yahweh on Mount Horeb about his harsh and judgemental character.

It is interesting to note that of the 3 things Elijah was instructed to do, he only performed the work of anointing Elisha in his place (Cp 2 Kgs 8:13; 9:3). This further highlights his unwillingness to change straight away.

We will now see in Elisha the way that Elijah should have changed. That being immediately.

“departed thence”

It was a trip of approximately 240Km from Horeb to Abel-Meholah.

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Abel-Meholah		
Elisha		

“ploughing”

This was probably the first plough in 3 ½ years and lays testament to the rain that came on Israel after the events on Mount Carmel. It also indicates to us that the rain must have been quite substantial for there to still be ploughing over 1 ½ months after the initial rains.

“twelve yoke of oxen”

In Israel it was common for a family to have only one yoke of oxen (Cp Jer 51:23). Elisha's family must have been quite ‘well off’ to have 12 even after such a severe drought.

“Elisha with the twelfth”

Asiatic custom was that the owner of the oxen would be at the rear of the ploughing team. The Jewish Targum says that Elisha had ‘oversight over the 12’. Elisha was therefore responsible for organising people and would no doubt take it over one day. In many ways he was the exact opposite to Elijah.

**Explore**

Elijah and Elisha were in many ways opposites. In the space below, outline as many opposites that you can think of (including references – Elisha is mentioned from 2 Kgs 2-13) of how different Elijah and Elisha were. A few have been listed to start you off.

Elíjah	Elísha
A hairy man (2 Kgs 1v8).	A bald man (2 Kgs 2v23).
Elíjah was middle aged at the youngest.	Elísha was a young man - still performing his office 60 years later (2 Kgs 13v11).



Application

Elíjah was being taught in graphic terms that these are people in the Truth who are different to himself and in fact were used in preference to him. We can not limit the power of God by looking down on those who are different to us.

"Elijah passed by"

Picture the scene here. He walks up to Elisha in the field, throws his mantle over him and keeps on walking. There was no ceremony, no talking, no explaining to Elisha what had been done. (Cp v 20-21). How do you think you would respond to someone doing this?

“mantle”



Explore

Look up the following verses to see what a mantle is symbolic of in scripture. What do you think the significance of this is in 2 Kgs 2:13-14?

1 Sam 28:14

2 Kgs 2:8

2 Kgs 2:13-14

1 Kings 19:20

“And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?”

“left the oxen”

It is at this point that Elisha makes the conscious decision to turn his back on his former way of life. He had an attitude similar to that of the disciples.

*“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And **they straightway left their nets, and followed him.** And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And **they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him**” (Matt 4:19-22).*

“Let me”

There is a time to say goodbye and this was done by several people in scripture. Of particular note was Paul when leaving Miletus (Cp Acts 20:36-38).



Explore

Elisha's actions in returning to his family seem to conflict with what the Lord Jesus Christ says about returning to one's family in Lk 9:59-62 (NB – this whole chapter sees Christ's mind in the events of Elijah and Elisha).

“And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk 9:59-62).

The question here with Elisha is was he 'looking back' at his old way of life? Analyse verses 20-21. What actions did Elisha take to cut off his way of life?

How was this different from the men in Lk 9?

When Christ is talking in Lk 9, he is talking about people who say they'll follow Christ, but they'll do it when they're ready and will not make the 100% commitment. They want to put all their domestic affairs right before they commit.

Elisha was willing to make the cut with his former way of life and so when he goes back to his family to say goodbye no sin has occurred.



Think About

If God is going to be anything in our lives, he's got to be everything! 100% commitment is what God wants from us.

It is a common thought in young people that we will commit to God when we've finished school or uni or when things are going smoothly in our lives. If we believe the Truth, Jesus tells us that we can not put off our commitment.



Application

Do we make the cut with things in our life?

The Apostle Paul talks about cutting off the flesh with its affections and lusts. In other words, don't give an opportunity for your baser instincts to take over. Sometimes we can think of these things in terms of major sins, and sometimes don't think about 'minor' sins. We need to remember that sin is sin regardless of the severity we may put on it.

Think about your character. Are there any things in your character that you think that you need to change? e.g. always being right, ridiculing other people, manipulating situations for your own ends.

Elijah needed to make the cut with these things and Elisha made them, how can we cut them off?

"What have I done to thee"

Different renderings of this verse include the following:

Go, and return back: for that which was my part, I have done to thee. (DRB)

Return, for I have done a work for thee. (LXX)

"You can go," Elijah said. "But remember what I've done for you." (CEV)

"All right, go back. I'm not stopping you!" (GNB)

The words “what have I done to thee?” can only mean, I have not wanted to put any constraint upon thee, but leave it to thy free will to decide in favour of the prophetic calling.¹



Think About

Elisha now has a choice as to what he is going to do. He has freewill to choose either the hard way or the easy way (Cp Mat 7:13-14). He has the conviction that he wants to serve God. This is what God wants from us, service from conviction. Living a life of faith where that faith is demonstrated in the way we live – Serving Him.

1 Kings 19v21

“And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.”

“he returned back”

When Elisha returned to his family he made the necessary cuts with his former way of life in killing his oxen and using his plough to cook it. He can now not turn back to his former way of life.



Application

Elisha did not have to literally kill the oxen or destroy his plough. This was a ceremonial act to show that he had completely left his former way of life. He has done away with anything that may potentially be a problem for him (NB – he would have inherited the large family business).

There are many things that are potential problems for us in our lives that may draw us away from the Truth. The best way of dealing with these things is when faith has moved us to act in cutting them out of our life. But sometimes we give ourselves the opportunity to turn back to our ‘old’ way of life.

Do we subtly ‘trick’ ourselves into thinking that we’re OK with a ‘potential problem’ when we’re really not? E.g. internet, TV programs, being alone with your boyfriend/girlfriend.

How could we follow the example of Elisha in eradicating the potential problems in our life?

“went after Elijah and ministered unto him”

Elisha ministered to or served Elijah². This was a great act considering the circumstances on a natural level.

Despite the glaring differences in personality of Elijah and Elisha, they worked very well together. They were still together after 10 years and had formed a very close bond.

¹ Keil & Delitzsch – Commentary on the Old Testament

² Brown-Driver-Briggs, Hebrew definitions

The key to the success of their relationship was service, particularly by Elisha. Naturally speaking, the biggest difficulty in their work would be getting on with one another seeing they were so different.

The same thing is found in Christ's disciples and their different personalities

Peter = forthright

Martha = practical

John = meditative

Thomas = analytical

They were all different, but they needed to get along. When they were focussed on service they were focussed on others and not on themselves. Elijah and Elisha both walked and talked about the same things. They were both servants and hence were able to get along very well.



Think About

We need to get along with each other in the Truth and develop our Agape and Phileo love for one another.

Consider Paul's words in Phil 2:2-5;

Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

How can you apply this principle to your own life?



Explore

Look up the following references of when strife occurred between disciples of Christ and what the cause of this was.

Lk 10:38-42

Lk 22:23-24

Comparisons lead to divisions and we start to label things we shouldn't and judge things that we don't understand. We need to be service oriented.

Section Summary

Elijah moves from Mt Horeb to annoint Elisha as a prophet.

Elisha realises the enormity of what Elijah has done to him and returns to his family to say goodbye.

Elisha makes the total cut with his former way of life.

Discussion Questions

Elijah and Elisha were almost exact opposites, yet, both lived the Truth. What lessons can we take from this situation? How were each of them able to demonstrate the Truth in their lives?

Elisha made the complete cut with his former way of life. What implications does this have for our lives today?

How did Elisha show a righteous attitude throughout this passage? How can we apply this to our lives?

How important are role models in your life? Who are some role models in scripture? How can you model your life after them? Who are role models in your ecclesia? Why not tell them? Elisha told Elijah.

Elisha was considerably younger than Elijah when he was a role model to him. It is also interesting to think that the Lord Jesus Christ was only a young man (30-33 years old) and he is our ultimate role model. How can you, as a young person, be a role model to those older than you?

There was a great bond between Elijah and Elisha. A bond between young and old. What are some of the benefits of having a good relationship and even friendships with brethren and sisters much older than you?

Part 2 - Elijah and Elisha's Journey

2 Kings 2v1

“And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.”

We now jump forward approximately 10 years to when Elijah was to leave Israel. During this time we know little about the relationship between Elijah and Elisha except that a great bond has developed between these two men. And it is this bond that has effected a change in Elijah.

Put yourself in Elijah's shoes for a moment. You have been told by God that you're going to be replaced as prophet but you don't know how this is going to happen. You have also just received a vision that you are going to be taken away from everything that you know. How would you feel? Insecure, anxious, stressed.

Elijah has a tendency to fear the unknown and to become a recluse in times of trial (Cp 1 Kgs 19:3; 2 Kgs 1:15). Now, we see those same characteristics exhibited here when Elijah is going through this trial.

The beauty of this chapter is that both God and Elisha comfort Elijah and help him through this trial in a variety of different ways such is their love for him.

“take Elijah up into heaven”

It is unknown exactly where Elijah was taken in this incident. However, one thing can be certain, that Elijah did not go to heaven where God dwells.

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven (Jn 3:13).

There is a lot of confusion about what actually happened to Elijah and there are many different views, but before we consider what happened to Elijah, it is important to understand that Elijah did die, perhaps not at this point in time, but eventually suffered the same fate as all men (Cp 1 Cor 15:22).



Explore

Elijah is not the only person in scripture that was 'taken away'. The other characters (Moses and Enoch) both had similar experiences, but both of them died. What are the similarities between these two characters and Elijah? What do these passages say about their death?

Enoch (Gen 5:24; Heb 11:5; 13).

Moses – appeared with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Deut 31:14; 34:5-6; Matt 17:3).

To give weight to the argument that Elijah did die are the words of 2 Chron 21:12. This was given some 15 years after the events of 2 Kgs 2. (See timeline at the start of these notes).

How would this prove that Elijah did not go to heaven?

“whirlwind”

The Hebrew means a hurricane, tempest or storm (Cp 1 Kgs 19:11). This was the means by which Elijah was taken to heaven, not the chariot. It is symbolic of his personality. This characteristic was not required to turn Israel any longer and as such it was symbolically leaving Israel so that Elisha, the still small voice of Elisha, could take over.

“went with Elisha from Gilgal”

There are a number of Gilgals in scripture. Suffice to say that this was the Gilgal to the north of Bethel.

Not only had Elijah been given the vision that he was to be taken away, but also Elisha and the sons of the prophets. It appears that Elisha met Elijah here at Gilgal to comfort him in this unknown experience.



2 Kings 2v2-6

“And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head today? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from

thy head today? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on."

"Tarry here"

When Elijah goes through trial he wants to be alone (Cp 1 Kgs 19:3).

"Bethel"



Explore

Use the following verses to outline what has been the history of Bethel throughout scripture. How would this give Elijah comfort?

Gen 28:10-19

1 Sam 17:16

1 Kgs 12:28-29

1 Kgs 16:34

2 Kgs 2:2

How would God sending Elijah here give him comfort? (Cp 1 Kgs 16:34)

"Jericho"



Explore

Use the following verses to outline what has been the history of Jericho throughout scripture. How would this give Elijah comfort?

Josh 2:1

Josh 2:24

1 Kgs 16:29

2 Kgs 2:4

How would God sending Elijah here give him comfort? (Cp 1 Kgs 16:34)



Think About

God was comforting Elijah by bringing him to these places and showing him that the work he had accomplished was very successful and that Israel had come so far from where they started off under Ahab.

Although we get no direct revelation from God today, think about how we too can be comforted by Him. Largely this is found through prayer and meditation on His word.

“I will not leave thee”

All Elijah needed at this point was a friend. God, in his wisdom and foresight gave Elisha, his best mate, the same vision to help comfort Elijah through this trial.

The phrase “I will not leave thee” is used sparingly throughout scripture. Of particular note are the following instances:

When Jacob was at Bethel when he received the promises given to Abraham and Isaac – Gen 28:10-19.

To Joshua when Israel was about to cross the Jordan – Josh 1:5.

When Israel was going through persecution – Jer 46:28.

On these occasions Yahweh is the speaker. However, here it is Elisha. There is a subtle difference between what Elisha says to what Yahweh says. Elisha says he will not leave Elijah, while Yahweh says that He will never leave us.



Application

Being a friend is an important aspect of life in the Truth. Look up the following verses that show us what it means to be a friend.

2 Chron 20:7, Prov 17:17-18, Prov 18:24, Prov 27:6,9-10,17, Matt 11:19.

How can you show these characteristics to your friends?

“from thy head”

This seems to be an allusion to the way that scholars sat at the feet of their masters (Cp Acts 22:3).

“Yea, I know it, hold ye your peace”

Elisha has a real concern for Elijah and so doesn't want him to be any more anxious than he already would be. He already knows Elijah's going to be taken away and so doesn't need to talk about it with the prophets and risk Elijah overhearing. (Perhaps he too feels overwhelmed by the situation?). He doesn't want Elijah to be upset because he (Elijah) has a real fear of the unknown.

“Jordan”

Although the river Jordan is often associated with this, 'Jordan' in this instance is referring to a place, obviously near the river. The place spoken of is that place where Israel entered the land under Joshua and was known as the plains of Moab (Cp Num 22:1).



Explore

Use the following passage that has several links with 2 Kgs 2 to show how Elijah being sent to Jordan would give him encouragement.

Josh 1:1-6



Application

Australian culture is very much against the 'tall poppy syndrome' and hence in our conversations we can be quite harsh and negative towards our friends. We 'bag them out' or 'cut them down' so to speak. As a result, we can find it quite difficult to be 'nice' to one another and supportive of what someone else is doing. We find it difficult to encourage one another and openly show how we feel about our friends.

Consider the following verses.

Psa 27:14, Dan 10:18-19, Deut 1:38, Hag 2:4, Deut 3:28, 1 Cor 11:2

God encourages us all the time and has given us examples of how he has done this to characters in the Bible.

How do these verses show how we ought to encourage one another?

Using the above verses, what is encouragement?

How does God encourage us?

How can we encourage our friends?

Section Summary

Elijah is told that he must leave Israel in a whirlwind.

God encourages Elijah in his work by showing him that the work of turning Israel around, although not complete, has been very effective.

This is done by God leading Elijah to the places that were once centres of apostasy but now have gatherings of the sons of the prophets in them.

Elisha has Elijah's best interests at heart by not allowing the prophets to speak of Elijah's departure.

Discussion Questions

God cared for Elijah when he was going through this trial by sending him to places where Elijah could see the success in his work of turning Israel back to God. God cares for us in many different ways.

What are some of the ways that God cares for you?

How does the love of God affect your every day life?

In what ways can you show your appreciation for everything that God has given for us?

What are some passages in scripture that give us comfort when going through trial or that show God's love for us?

Part 3 – Elijah and Elisha Leave Israel

2 Kings 2v7-8

“And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.”

“fifty men”

This is the third time in Elijah’s life that we find a group of 50 men. Note Elijah’s changed character in this instance. No longer is there talk of “I even I only am left” nor is there any ridicule of the way they live their lives. Rather, Elijah sees them in their correct light.



Think About

The beauty of Elijah’s life is seen in God using a variety of means to turn Elijah around, and despite Elijah’s many negative reactions, God still doesn’t give up on him. Elijah turned Israel, God turned Elijah. Elijah’s attitude towards his brethren has changed. This is seen not only in how he treats the prophets, but is also seen in the close bond that he has with Elisha.



Application

God used a variety of methods to turn Elijah around from the destroy mentality to the save mentality such as

Providing for him in time of need (1 Kgs 17:6)

Caring for him on his way to Horeb (1 Kgs 19:6-7)

Telling him bluntly that he needed to change (1 Kgs 19:16)

Giving him a friend in Elisha (2 Kgs 2)

Elijah responded negatively to the first three methods and it was the friendship of Elisha that really turned him around. It was the power of example that changed him.

We follow the example of Christ in our lives and hopefully as a result others can see Christ in us. How can our example to others help them toward the kingdom?

“they two”

This phrase gives us insight into the close relationship between Elijah and Elisha. The phrase is only used on 9 occasions in scripture (3 of which are in this chapter). Other significant occurrences include:

- Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:19).
- David and Jonathon (1 Sam 23:18).
- Husband and wife (Eph 5:31).

“went over on dry ground”

This is a highly significant act that Elijah and Elisha here performs. It shows to us that when Israel re-enter the land with Elijah after Christ’s return, that they will not go over the Jordan

dry-shod (as when they pass through the Euphrates and Red Sea) but rather, they will go through water coming from the 'living sea' (Zech 14:8), at the same location that John the Baptist baptised. Elijah will lead through the river Jordan which will be their baptism into Christ. This is considered in greater detail in session 6.



Explore

When else in scripture have waters been divided or dried up? What happened on each occasion and what was it for? Use the following verses as a starting point.

Ex 14:21-22 Cp 1 Cor 10:1-2

Josh 3:14-17

Others

2 Kings 2v9-10

“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.”

“Ask what I shall do for thee... And Elisha said”

Elijah assumed that Elisha would ask for something that was within his ability to give. Instead, Elijah has to rely on God to provide the request – something that Elijah certainly recognised.

Elisha's request is not what you would normally expect from someone. He was not interested in getting a new car, ipod, house or any other material and carnal items; he was focused on spiritual things. His attitude is similar to that of Solomon who asked for wisdom above all else (Cp 1 Kgs 3:9).

“double portion”

This is a direct reference to the Law of Moses. The double portion was the right of the firstborn child. Elisha sees himself as Elijah's firstborn.

**Explore**

Look up the following passages about the firstborn's role. What do these verses tell us about the role? What is this telling us about Elisha?

Ex 13:2

Deut 21:17

Gen 49:3

2 Chron 21:3

Num 8:14-18

1 Chron 5:1

“if thou see me”

The spirit would not allow Elijah to say any more. Elijah did not have the power to grant this, but he left it in Yahweh's hands to decide.

Section Summary

Elijah and Elisha leave Israel over the Jordan, dryshod.

Elisha asks Elijah for a double portion of Elijah's 'spirit' to be on him.

Elisha classes himself as Elijah's firstborn son.

Elijah and Elisha are separated by a chariot of fire.

Elijah is taken away from Elisha into the heavens by a whirlwind.

Elijah did not go to heaven, but rather some other place on earth.

Discussion Questions

Friendship is a major theme in this passage of scripture. The friendship that Elijah and Elisha built was one that was based on service in the Truth. They had a common hope and this drove what they did together.

How does a love of the Truth help to bind us together?

Elisha's actions towards Elijah, his best friend, can be seen as follows:

- Put himself out for Elijah.
- Gave Elijah verbal encouragement.
- Cared for his wellbeing.
- Told others to give his friend space.
- Spent time talking and walking with him.
- Gave him praise for who he had become.
- Copy the actions of our friends who copy Christ. In other words, use them as role models.

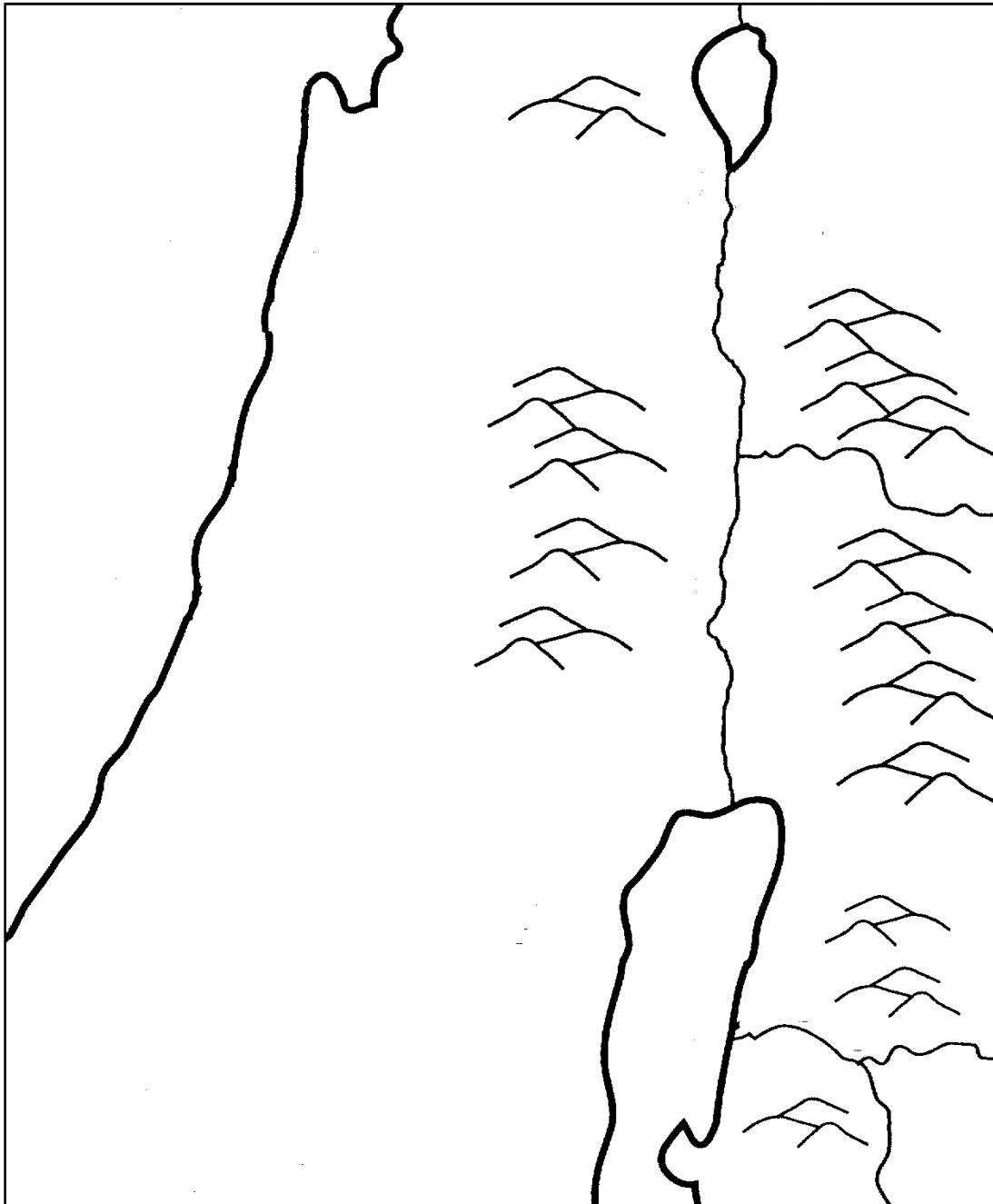
What are some practical ways that we can implement these principles to make our friendships more meaningful?

How can we show this kind of friendship towards those we care about?

What do you value in a friend? How do you show this character to your friends?

Further Study

The way Elijah leaves Israel is strikingly similar to the way Israel entered into the land. Read through Joshua 1-7 and mark on the map below where Israel went. Note down any similarities with how Elijah leaves and Israel enters. Also mark on in a different colour the way Elijah left Israel.



Symbolically, Elijah was leading Israel out of the land so that when he is to bring them back in when Christ has returned, he will do so in a way where they won't fail like they did under Joshua. It will be at that point, when Israel has completely turned to God that his work will be finished.

Part 4 – Elijah's Departure

2 Kings 2v11-12

“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.”

'chariot of fire, and horses of fire'

This event is symbolic of the Cherubim and hence *the manifestation of Yahweh* in the present and in the future.

Chariots in scripture are often used in relation to the Cherubim. Speaking of chariots in relation to the Cherubim, Bro Thomas says the following:

“We believe that the word is derived from the root 'rachav,' 'to ride' whether on an animal or in a vehicle”³.

The chariot is often associated with the Cherubim. Consider the following verses:

*“And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the **chariot of the cherubim**, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD (1 Chron 28:18).*

*“And **he rode upon a cherub**, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind” (Psa 18:10).*

*“The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: **he sitteth between the cherubim**; let the earth be moved” (Psa 99:1).*

*“For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his **chariots like a whirlwind**, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire” (Isa 66:15).*



Explore

Consider the vision of the Cherubim that Ezekiel was given in Ezekiel 1. What are the similarities that you can see between this vision and the events at Jordan with Elijah?

Not only is the Cherubim a symbol of God's character alone, but it also includes the saints in the future. It speaks of the saints as chariots that Yahweh will ride to victory.

*“Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst **ride upon** thine horses and **thy chariots** of salvation?” (Hab 3:8).*

³ Thomas, J., *Phanerosis* (Centenary Edition) Logos Publications, West Beach

*“The **chariots of God** are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place” (Psa 68:17).*

Therefore, the horses and chariot that divide Elijah and Elisha are symbolic of the Cherubim and hence God manifestation both now and in the Kingdom. And both Elijah and Elisha will, like us, be part of this chariot that Yahweh will ride to victory!

Note too that Elisha calls Elijah this chariot. He identifies Elijah with God manifestation. Can our friends say the same thing about us? Can we say the same thing about our friends? The application of this principle goes even further. Can others say that we are like our friends who have manifested God’s character. When Elisha was on his death bed and Joash came to see him he said the exact same thing about Elisha.

“Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof” (2 Kgs 13:14).

We should all be able to have this said about us. We should all be striving for the one character, God’s. We should be able to say to our friends who are showing this character “the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof”.



Think About

We need to become vehicles of Yahweh now, just like Elijah was then in his day. Just like chariots and horses are subject to the will of the driver (Yahweh) so too are we subject to God’s will and we need to be guided by His word. In this sense, God is revealed in us now.

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet 2:21).

“whirlwind”

This is the last impression that we are left with concerning Elijah. It is indicative of his character. He was now leaving Israel.

There is a time and place for judgement and harshness (Cp Num 25; Gal 2:11), however, in Israel, now was not that time. It was time now for the still small voice of Elisha.

“My father, my father”

A father is a person that we look up to and on whom we model our behaviour. This is certainly the case with our Heavenly Father and to a limited extent our personal fathers. This was a sign of respect that Elisha had for Elijah and that he saw himself as his firstborn son.

“rent them in two”

This is a sign of mourning (Cp Job 1:20-22). You can imagine the emotion in the air in this scene. Elijah has gone and it will not be until the Kingdom that Elisha will see his best friend again.



Application

Elijah was much older than Elisha and yet there was a great friendship despite their age.

There is a great importance in developing relationships with older brethren and sisters in our ecclesiās. What are some ways that we could do this?

The close nature of the friendship between Elijah and Elisha is seen through Elisha's actions towards Elijah in this passage. It also provides us with a model of how to develop our friendships with each other. Elisha:

- Put himself out for Elijah
- Gave Elijah verbal encouragement
- Cared for his wellbeing
- Told others to give his friend space
- Spent time talking and walking with him
- Gave him praise for who he had become

If we were to develop these aspects of our friendships they would be far more meaningful. What are some practical ways that we can do this?

Section Summary

The horses and chariot that divide Elijah and Elisha are symbolic of the cherubim and God manifestation.

Elisha calls Elijah the Chariot of Israel recognising God manifestation in Elijah.

Discussion Questions

How can we manifest God in our lives today?

Elisha had a great friendship with Elijah although Elijah was much older. How might we also develop relationships with the older brothers and sisters in the ecclesia?



Session

Preaching
in the
Kingdom

Overview of Session 6

From the time of Elijah's departure we read nothing about him before his death except for a letter to Jehoram King of Judah. However, many prophecies in the Old Testament show to us that Elijah does in fact have a very significant work to perform in the future. This future work is also picked up in the New Testament, primarily through John the Baptist and the events surrounding the transfiguration of Christ.

Throughout this session we aim to see the absolute importance of developing a vision of the kingdom and to encourage each other in this vision. Using the example of Elijah in the future we hope to see ourselves there, helping him to turn Israel around from their sinful ways to once again embrace the Truth and be reunited with Judah their brethren under the rulership of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Session Breakup

Elijah's role in the transfiguration of Christ.

John the Baptist - The spirit and power of Elijah.

Elijah and the Second Exodus.

Preaching in the Kingdom.

Part 1 - Elijah's Role in the Transfiguration of Christ

The Transfiguration – A Taste of the Kingdom

What is your vision of the Kingdom? Use scripture to support your vision.

Developing our vision of the Kingdom is so important for our life in the Truth. Proverbs 29:18 says the following:

“Where there is no vision, the people perish...”

Look up the following words and what they mean.

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Vision		
Perish		

From analysing these Hebrew words, it is obvious that this verse does not mean that if you don't have a vision you'll die. What does it mean and why is developing a vision so important?

The Importance of a Vision – Introducing the Transfiguration

Jesus knew the importance of developing a vision and this is what he focused on leading up to the events of the transfiguration¹. He wanted the disciples to see the value in living for the Kingdom and not for their own lives now. Focus on the life to come was Jesus' advice.

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt 16:24-26).

Jesus said that life is not for the here and now, and in fact rebuked Peter for trying to get him to pity himself² and hence focus on the present (Cp Matt 16:22-23). Our life now is to develop us for eternity.

¹ Records of the Transfiguration are found in Matt 17, Mark 9, Luke 9 and 2 Pet 1

Jesus then goes on to say that there were some of the disciples standing there (namely Peter, James and John) who would witness Christ in glory. They will literally see the value in not living for the here and now because the age to come far outweighs any life we may now have (Cp Matt 16:27-28).



Application

Jesus tells us to focus our lives on the future and to develop our vision of the Kingdom with the intention that we focus on the life to come more than on our lives now.

Jesus tells us to do three things:

Deny ourselves

Take up our cross

Follow Him

How can we do these things in our every day life?

Why is focusing on the life to come so much more important than our lives now?

The Transfiguration

The transfiguration was all about seeing Christ in glory! It's about getting a glimpse of what the kingdom will be like.

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Transfigured (Matt 17:2)		



Explore

From the records of the transfiguration (Matt 17, Mark 9, Luke 9 and 2 Pet 1) outline briefly the order of events that occurred in the space below.

Event	Reference

² The literal Greek for "Far be it from thee Lord" is equivalent to "Lord, be kind to/ merciful to/pity yourself" (Matt 16:22)

Event	Reference

An Encouragement for Christ

The purpose of the transfiguration was for *encouragement*, first of all to Christ, but also to the disciples and to us. We are encouraged because we can see the excellent glory (Cp 2 Pet 1:17) that Christ was seen in and it is this glory that we will one day be blessed to have. Although this glory was a great encouragement to Christ, this is not the reason that Elijah and Moses were on the mount talking with Jesus.

Jesus needed encouragement about his '*decease*' (Lk 9:31). He needed encouragement about not living for the here and now, but focussing on the future.

Name	Strong's Number & Greek Word	Meaning
Decease		

This is an extremely significant thing that Luke mentions here. Both Moses and Elijah are involved in an *exodus*. Moses led his *exodus* when the children of Israel left Egypt and entered into the Promised Land. Elijah is to lead his *exodus* after Christ has returned by bringing all the scattered Jews around the world back into the land of Israel.



Explore

The Greek word *exodus* is used on only 2 other occasions. Outline their contexts and significance in the spaces below.

2 Pet 1:15

Heb 11:22



Application

Elijah learned from the example of Elisha that encouragement is a necessary part of our life and now he is encouraging Christ. Needing encouragement to press on in the Truth is perfectly normal, even Jesus needed it. We therefore need to encourage each other to press towards the mark of the high calling which is in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:14).

Jesus was encouraged by Moses and Elijah to embrace his vision of the Kingdom and to love the work that he had to do (Cp Heb 12:2).

What is the exodus that Jesus was about to lead in his death and resurrection? Cp Heb 2:10.

How can we encourage each other in our visions of the Kingdom?

How important is your vision of the Kingdom in encouraging you?

Section Summary

Developing a vision is important because it helps keep us 'on track'.

The transfiguration of Christ gave him and us encouragement.

Elijah's role in the transfiguration was to speak with Christ about his 'exodus' and to encourage him.

Discussion Questions

Elijah was encouraged by Elisha before he departed and Christ was encouraged by Elijah before his 'decease'. Encouragement of one another is therefore a very important aspect of our life in the Truth.

How can we encourage one another?

What is your vision of the Kingdom?

How does our vision of the Kingdom encourage ourselves and others?

Why is not focussing on our life now important when developing our vision of the Kingdom?

What are some practical ways of implementing Christ's words in Matt 16:24-26?

Part 2 – John the Baptist – The Spirit & Power of Elijah

Of all the characters in Scripture, perhaps the most similar to Elijah was John the Baptist. Repeatedly throughout the gospels both characters are linked together in some form or other, whether it is in appearance, mission or people mistaking Jesus for them.



Explore

From what you have studied about Elijah so far, read through the main passages concerning John the Baptist below and note down the similarities and/or differences between the two characters.

Isa 40:1-8

Matt 3

Matt 11:7-19

Matt 17:11-13

Luke 8:18-28



Application

John the Baptist was described in Isa 40 as only a 'voice' who did no miracles (Jn 10:41) while Elijah performed many miracles.

We don't witness physical miracles today like the raising of people from the dead or the blind being given back their sight. However, we do witness miracles that occur through the 'voice' of God. The ability of His word to change people. This voice is far more effective long term than witnessing a physical miracle (Cp Israel in the wilderness).

As young people we can sometimes think of the word of God as quite boring and powerless to help us in finding the answers to life. Yet, the miracle of the word of God to turn a person around from their sinful ways is perhaps the greatest miracle of all. We need to see God's word as living and powerful in our lives (Heb 4:12) and realise the phenomenal miracles we see in ourselves and others being changed every day!

The angel Gabriel, when talking to Zacharias in the temple, said of John the Baptist:

*“...thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John... And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the **spirit and power of Elijah**, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Lk 1:13-17).*

What did it mean then, for John the Baptist to come in the spirit and power of Elijah? In order to understand this we need to separate the phrase into its separate parts.

The Spirit of Elijah

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning (Thayer's definition is helpful as well)
Spirit (note the context)		

In essence, the spirit of Elijah that John the Baptist came in is seen in his attitude of mind. The attitude of Elijah throughout his ministry is not the attitude that is being referred to here. The reference here is to Mal 4:5-6 where Malachi is talking about Elijah being sent to the Jews around the world to save them from being destroyed, which is the exact opposite to his character in his ministry (Cp Rom 11:2).

*“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet **before** the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, **lest** I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal 4:6).*

Therefore, when John the Baptist came, it was to be with the attitude of mind or spirit that Elijah displayed at the end of his ministry when he had changed from the destroy mentality to the save mentality.



Explore

John the Baptists' attitude was very similar to that of Elijah at the end of his ministry – the save mentality. Use the following verses to show how this spirit was displayed.

Isa 40:1-8

Matt 3

Mk 6:14-29

The Power of Elijah

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Power		

The power of Elijah that John the Baptist came with was not seen in any miracles because John did no miracles (Jn 10:41). It was seen in the persuasive nature of his teaching. It is the same 'force' or 'power' that Elijah had behind his teaching. People could see that what he was speaking was the Truth without any doubt and forced the people to believe or at least acknowledge that what he said was true (Cp 1 Kgs 18:39).

How successful was the turning work of John the Baptist? (Cp Matt 3:5-6; 11:7; Lk 1:16)

Jesus was described by the people before his transfiguration as either Elijah or John the Baptist (Cp Matt 16:41; Mk 8:28; Lk 9:19).

How was Jesus' teaching similar (yet far superior) to that of Elijah and John the Baptist? (Cp Matt 7:28-29)

Do you think that the 'force' with which John spoke was one of harshness or was it something that people saw as absolute Truth? Cp Isa 40:1-8; 1 Cor 2:4

Explain briefly the spirit and power with which John the Baptist came?

The spirit and power of Elijah was seen in the turning of Israel to the Truth. John the Baptist had a work of coming before Christ to 'prepare the way' for him and hence turn people's thinking around so that they were ready for Christ. Likewise Elijah, after Christ's return, will do the same.

John the Baptist – 'Elijah' to Judah

Mal 4:4-6 is perhaps the key passage in relation to Elijah's future work.

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."



Application

The preaching of John the Baptist throughout his ministry and the preaching of Elijah towards the end of his, is evidence that there are methods that can attract people to the Truth.

Spirit

Both Elijah and John had the same mentality and this helped them in their preaching. Think about the following situations and how we can show a same mentality.

A JW knocks on your front door. Do you argue with them or seek to convert them? This is an ideal preaching opportunity.

At lunch at school, uni or work you sit near a person who is by themselves. Do you move over to them and tell them about the Truth with a desire to save them?

You are on the Christadelphian stand at the Royal Easter Show and someone asks you about Christadelphians. Do you tell them wanting to save them?

Power

Another aspect of John and Elijah's preaching was the force with which they spoke. People couldn't argue because they knew what John and Elijah were speaking was the Truth.

How can we try and make our preaching as forceful or effective as John and Elijah did?

Using the prophetic rule that those Jews who are in the land are described as Judah and those outside the land are described as Israel³, Mal 4:4-6 indicates to us that Elijah must come to both Israel and Judah because this was a prophecy given to 'all Israel'.

When the Lord Jesus Christ came in his first advent, he did so to that remnant of people who were descendants of the kingdom of Judah. As a forerunner to Christ, John the Baptist was 'Elijah' to Judah (Cp Matt 11:14; 17:11-13).

Using Malachi 4 and applying it to John the Baptist, answer the following questions:

How was John the Baptist Elijah to Judah?

What is the great and dreadful day of Yahweh that is being spoken of?

If this was a prophecy to 'all Israel' what is left to be accomplished?

³ For further information see Elpis Israel Pg 446-457. Cp Zech. 9:13; Ezek. 20:27,30,39; Mic. 5:7-8.

Section Summary

There are a lot of similarities between the work of John the Baptist and the work of Elijah.

The spirit of Elijah is a *save mentality*.

The power of Elijah is the persuasive nature of his teaching.

John the Baptist was 'Elijah' to Judah.

Discussion Questions

John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the children of Israel back to be like the hearts of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. John the Baptist did this through developing the same character traits as Elijah.

The spirit of Elijah was seen in his *save mentality* at the end of his ministry. How important is a *save mentality* when preaching the Truth?

What are some ways that our preaching might have the same power that Elijah's and John the Baptist's had?

Although John did no miracles, his word had the same effect as a miracle in turning people to the Truth. How is the word of God changing us a miracle? Discuss examples that you can think of in every day life.

Part 3 – Elijah and the Second Exodus

The work of Elijah in the second exodus of the children of Israel is monumental and is intrinsically linked with both the events surrounding his departure (2 Kings 2) and those of the transfiguration of our Lord (Luke 9). Elijah's second exodus plays a central role in his life and work.

In considering Elijah's work, it is important that we realise that his work concerns only those Jews who are outside the land of Israel at the time of Christ's return. He will have the task of bringing those of scattered Jewry world wide into covenant relationship with God once more based on spiritual principles rather than mere lineage.

'Israel' & 'Judah' in the Prophetic Work

(Events subsequent to the return of Christ – Bro J. Cowie)

In the days of the kings the nation of Israel was divided politically into two separate kingdoms - Israel in the north consisted of a majority of the people of the ten tribes, while Judah in the south consisted of principally Judah and Benjamin with many from Levi and Simeon who had their inheritance within the boundary of the southern kingdom.

In time, with mass migrations from the north to the south, and the Assyrian captivity of Israel in 723 B.C., a total confusion of the tribes took place so that the kingdom of Judah which survived to 586 B.C. actually consisted of people from every tribe of Israel. Despite this the nation continued to be known as Judah.

It was this political situation which led to the use of the terms 'Israel' and 'Judah' in the prophetic scriptures to describe the Jews scattered abroad and the Jews in the Land.

'Israel', 'Ephraim', and 'the remnant of Jacob' are synonymous terms for the nation of Israel in dispersion and in the latter day context relate to scattered Jewry worldwide - Zech. 9:13; Ezek. 20:27,30,39; Mic. 5:7-8.

'Judah' is the name given to the Jews who have returned to the land and established the state of Israel. Thus, we read that Christ will save 'the tents of Judah first' - Zech. 12:7.



Explore

The best way to address this section is for you to read through and make your own notes on the second exodus. The remainder of this section will give you more of a pointer if you are having trouble. The major passages that you will need to consider are as follows:

Mal 4:5-6 – The work and timing of Elijah's mission

Matt 24:30-31 – The timing of Elijah's mission and who is involved

Ezek 20:33-38 – Where Israel will be taken – "the wilderness of the peoples" Cp Rev 17:3

Jer 3:12-4:2 – The terms of Israel's restitution

Isa 11:11-16; 27:12-13 – Israel's route back into the land

Hos 2:14-19 – Israel's entry point into the land

Zech 9:12-17 – The strength of Israel and Judah reunited and Yahweh as their protector

Other passages you may like to consider include

- Jer 31
- Mic 7
- Isa 29:22-24
- Zech 14

Before you commence this next section of the notes it is highly advisable that you first at least read through all of the passages in the previous “Explore”.

1. The Timing of Elijah's Mission

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal 4:5-6).

“I will send you”

Malachi was a prophet to Israel and hence this prophecy is specifically related to Israel (or Ephraim i.e. the scattered Jews around the world). However, there is also application to Judah as considered in the previous section.

“great and dreadful day of Yahweh”

The phrase “day of Yahweh” is used 29 times in scripture. Here, it is not only the ‘day of Yahweh’ but the ‘great and dreadful day of Yahweh’.



Explore

The following places are where the phrase “day of Yahweh” occurs in scripture.

Isa 2:12	Isa 13:6,9	Isa 34v8
Ezek 13v5	Ezek 30v3	Joel 1v15
Joel 2v1,11,31	Joel 3v14	Jer 46v10
Lam 2v22	Amos 5v18,20	Oba 1v15
Zech 14v1	Zeph 1v7,8,14,18	Zeph 2v2
Acts 2v20	1 Cor 5v5	2 Cor 1v14
1 Thes 5v2	2 Pet 3v10	

The day of Yahweh is not just a reference to Armageddon in scripture. What does it relate to in general? What is the significance of the great and dreadful day of Yahweh?⁴

“to turn”

This was Elijah's whole purpose throughout his mission. See notes in session 1 for further information.

⁴ Refer to “The mystery of the Covenant of the Holy Land explained” Pg 24-31 and “Eureka” Vol 5 Pg 264

Although Elijah's turning work during his ministry was not totally successful, this turning work in the future will be a 100% success. It will be his mission to turn the hearts of Israel to be like those of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This will be by a purging out process (Cp Ex 20:38).

At what time does Malachi say Elijah will go out to Israel?

We gain a little more insight into the work of Elijah, who is involved and its timing in Matt 24:29-35.

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven... coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt 24:30-31).

The context of this passage is that AD 70 has occurred and now in v29 the political powers of the world will be in turmoil before the return of Christ. Verse 30 sees Christ's return to Israel. Therefore, the judgement seat must have already occurred.

"angels"

The Greek word for angel simply means a messenger. These messengers will be sent out for a specific work. This work will be to gather Israel, the elect, back together and to bring them into the land.

"trumpet"

The trumpet being spoken of here is one with the specific purpose of gathering Israel. This is not without precedent, as the same concept is picked up in Isa 27:13 and Zech 9:14, both of which talk about the regathering of Israel under Elijah.

"elect"



Explore

Do a search in a concordance for where the phrase "my elect" is used in scripture.

Note - Strong's numbers are as follows:

Hebrew = 972

Greek = 1588

Who are the groups of people that are called God's 'elect' in scripture?

In the context here, is it possible that the 'elect' are the saints? Yes/No? Why?

Who are the messengers who go out to get the 'elect'?

When do the messengers go out to collect the 'elect'? NB – the rest of the chapter gives the answer.

Where do Elijah and the 'messengers' collect Israel from?

2. Israel are Gathered Together

“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger forever” (Jer 3:12).

The prophecy of Jeremiah chapters 3 and 4 is remarkable. It details to us exactly what Israel will go through when the Lord Jesus Christ has returned (Cp Jer 3:16-17). The passage (Jer 3:12-4:2) shows to us that before Israel enters into the land that a number of things will happen to them.

Where does it say that Israel are gathered before they will go into the land?

“And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face” (Ezek 20:34-35).

This passage deals again with the regathering of Israel from all nations after the return of Christ, however, this gives us more detail about what will happen to Israel before they enter the land.

Where will Israel be taken during this phase of Elijah’s work?

The only other mention of a place in scripture that speaks of a wilderness filled with people is Rev 17:3,15.

“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns..... And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Rev 17:3,15).

What is the specific area that John is talking about in Rev 17:3,15? A commentary may be useful to find this out.

From the above passages, mark on the map on pg 168 exactly where it is that scattered Israel are taken after Elijah and the ‘messengers’ have brought them out from all nations.

3. In the Wilderness of the Peoples 40 Years

Micah 7 talks about this time and likens it to the days of Israel when they came out of Egypt. Hence, the 40 years that Israel experienced in the wilderness will be played out again in the regions of Central Europe.

Israel Confounds the Nations

During this 40 year period, the people of the world will be astonished at how Israel continues to survive amidst horrific odds (Cp Mic 7:15-20).

“And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out” (Ezek 20:33-34).

“mighty hand”

Divine power to judge the nations and destroy their resistance will be freely exercised by the saints who will overshadow Israel unseen to the nations. This demonstration of amazing supernatural power by a seemingly unarmed and defenceless people will 'confound' the nations and convince Israel.⁵

The Judgements Israel Will Suffer

Not only will the nations be confounded at Israel during this time, but Israel will also go through a 'refining' process. Although many of the Jews who come to the wilderness of the people will be repentant already, there will still be a number who rebel. These rebels will be dealt with in this place.

“And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face... And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant” (Ezek 20:35-37).

“plead”

Name	Strong's Number	Meaning
Plead		

How do other translations translate this word?

“pass under the rod”

This is a rod of correction. Consider how the following passages use this rod.

Rev 2:25-26

Rev 19:15

⁵ Cowie, J. *Events Subsequent to the Return of Christ* (Pg 55)

4. Israel's Departure Route

At the end of the 40 years, Israel will be taken from the wilderness of the people back into the land. The following passages tell us about how Israel will get back there.

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left... And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry-shod” (Isa 11:11-16).

NB – Isa 27:12-13 also speaks of this event.

Israel comes back via two routes. What are they? Mark these routes on the map on Pg 167.

Israel does not go directly to Jerusalem. Where are they taken?

There is a highly significant facet of Israel's return that is similar to the departure of Elijah. What is it? (Cp 2 Kgs 2:8)

5. Waiting to Cross Jordan

Israel have been brought at this point into the land promised to Abraham (Cp Gen 15:18).

“And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt” (Isa 11:16).

How do Israel travel to the river Jordan?

From Isaiah's prophecy the entry point into Israel is at the river Jordan, however, he doesn't tell us where at the river Jordan. Is it toward the northern or southern end?

Hosea gives us the detail about this time and where it is exactly that Israel re-enter the land.

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt” (Hos 4:14-15).

There is only one mention in this passage about where Israel cross the Jordan. That being near the valley of Achor.

Where is the valley of Achor? (Cp Josh 7:26) Mark it on the map on Pg 168.

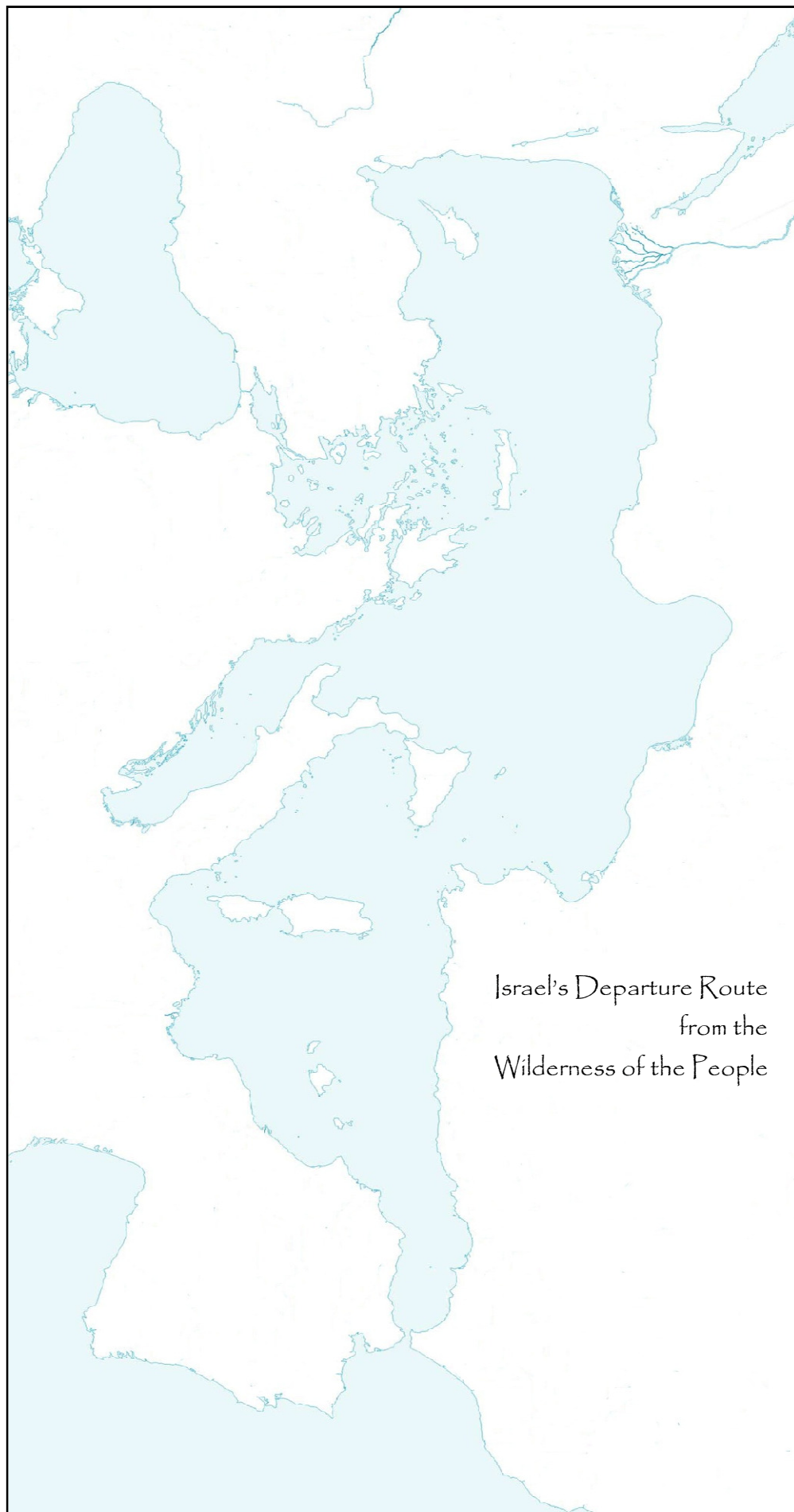
There are significant events that occurred at this very spot. What happened in the following passages? Locate these areas on the map on Pg 168.

Jn 1:28

Josh 2:1

Elijah here is to figuratively lead Israel through the waters of baptism. Israel is to be baptised into Christ. While the waters that John baptised in during Jesus' day came from the Dead Sea, because of the great earthquake (Cp Zech 14:4), the waters of the Dead Sea are lifted up and now this water is no longer 'dead' but 'living' (Cp Zech 14:8). Israel will have to pass through 'living waters'. From here they travel directly up the Valley of Achor (which is significantly larger due to the great earthquake) to finally meet their Messiah and truly be united again with Judah their brethren (Cp Hos 2:19).

On the map on Pg 168 outline the movements of Israel when they were to enter the land. Contrast this with how Elijah left the land. How was Elijah's work of turning Israel in his second exodus successful where his first advent had failed?





Israel's Entry into the Land

Section Summary

Elijah is sent out before the great and dreadful day of Yahweh.

During the next 40 years Elijah gathers the scattered Jews together.

Scattered Jewry are taken to the 'wilderness of the people' where all rebels will be purged out.

The remnant that are left will be taken into the promised land at the exact place Elijah left from in his ministry.

Discussion Questions

Outline how Elijah is to bring the Jews home.

There are a number of similarities between how Elijah left Israel in his first advent and the way that he returns. What do you think the significance of this is in terms of turning Israel around?

You may like to discuss (in a spirit of meekness and humility) some of the different views concerning the work of Elijah in the future such as the timing of events.

Part 4 – Preaching in the Kingdom

There are a number of passages that deal with the work of preaching in the Kingdom. Not only is it confined to the work of Elijah and the saints in preaching to Israel in order to get them to submit to Christ, it is also the work of the saints in instructing the nations about the Truth.

Preaching to Israel

When Elijah and the saints preach to Israel they are getting them to turn back to God. Essentially, what they are preaching to Israel is repentance (Cp Matt 3:2). Elijah's message starts off with a rebuke to Israel, but then concludes with an appeal for them to turn because this is where there is salvation.

“Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God” (Jer 3:20-22).

What is the rebuke that Elijah and the saints will deliver to Israel?

What is the appeal?

In addition to this, Jeremiah gives us further information on just what Israel will have to do in order to be accepted by God.

“If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove. And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory” (Jer 4:1-2).

What are the terms upon which Israel will be allowed to return to the land?

Preaching to the Nations

In addition to this preaching to Israel, there is also preaching to the non-Jewish population at the same time.

(Note the context in Rev 14:1-5).

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev 14:6-7).

“another angel”

This angel is the same as the one spoken of in Rev 10:1 and is symbolic of the saints (Cp Rev 1:12-16). It is the saints who will be preaching or proclaiming this message.

“midst of heaven”

A proclamation is made to the rulers of church and state in the mid-heaven. It is the mid-heaven because the highest heaven is now occupied by the Lamb who is the new Super-Power!⁶

“everlasting gospel” – Aionian Gospel

This is the gospel that is specific to the 1000 years after Christ's return. This gospel that will be preached will contain the following:⁷

- That the resurrection and glorification of the saints has occurred.
- Christ and the saints have returned in great glory and David's throne has been set up on Mt Zion.
- All nations are invited to recognise Christ as their king.
- Christ is appointed to execute judgement and justice on the earth and to rule the world in righteousness.
- Christ will wipe away all tears from their eyes.
- That his purpose is to change the face of the world by enlightening mankind with the Truth.
- That, if they will accept this invitation, they shall live in peace and without fear.
- Christ is prepared to destroy anyone who does not submit to him. Particularly any powers that corrupt their people.

⁶ Manitoulin Youth Conference notes: *The Kingdom visions of Revelation – Workbook 2*

⁷ Thomas. J. *Eureka: An exposition of the Apocalypse* – Vol 5, Pg 36 (Logos Edition)



Application

Write a proclamation to be announced to the nations introducing to them the King and his faithful followers. Issue, in your own words, an invitation to give allegiance to the King of Israel with the blessings that will follow. If this offer is rejected judgment will come.

Here are some suggested verses and you could use as a basis: Rev. 14:6-7; Lk. 1:32-33; Psalm 2:6-12; Acts 17:22-31; Rev. 21:4; Isa. 55:1; Mic. 4:4; Rev. 14:9-11.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Section Summary

We will be involved in preaching in the Kingdom.

We will preach the 'aionian gospel' to Israel and to the nations.

Discussion Questions

How would you show the same mentality in preaching to the world at large when Christ has returned? Could you apply these principles today?

What aspects of the 'aionian gospel' might you be able to incorporate into your preaching today?

Our preaching in the Kingdom **will be** effective. What are some ways that our preaching can be effective today?

Conclusion

Elijah's flight from Jezebel (in **1 Kings 19**) saw him run to Horeb (Mt Sinai) in a state of depression and disillusionment. He was frustrated and wanted to run away from it all. When he arrived at Sinai he pleaded to God to bring about the great and dreadful day of Yahweh. He fled to "the cave" that Moses had been in many years before. He wanted to convince God to pour out His judgments upon Israel. Paul says that Elijah made intercession **against** Israel when he was at Horeb (**Rom 11v2**). Elijah wanted to bring a curse on the nation. But God had to teach him a very important lesson. Elijah learnt that lesson. He learnt that the power God has to change people lies in the gentle spirit of persuasion. It is found by showing loving kindness and care. It is found in the love of Christ that passes all knowledge.

Herein is the great lesson of Elijah's life. To develop an earnest desire to save others. Not by force. Not by earthquake, wind or fire. But by the gentle persuasion of God's Word. By the love of Christ which compels us and will in turn compel others.

Do we care about the eternal destiny of others? Is that the driving force in our lives? Has the love of God had an emotional affect upon us? Eternal life is to know God and His Son Jesus Christ (**John 17v3**). God is love. Real love is to passionately seek out the good of others rather than satisfying ourselves. We need to develop this desire in the whole way we live our lives.

If the goal of our lives now is the salvation of others, then God will give us the desires of our heart in the Kingdom age. The saints will go out to the world to plead with the mortal population to turn to God, the creator of heaven and earth (**Rev 14v6-7**). If our one desire today is to save others, God will give us that opportunity when Christ returns. If our desire is to gently and patiently persuade others with love and with genuine feeling, then we will be fit to work in the Kingdom age.

This is Elijah's work of the future. God is going to send him **BEFORE** the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahweh. Not to bring it about, but to save the Jewish people **BEFORE** it comes. Yes, judgment **is** coming, both at Armageddon and in the fiery judgments on the nations that will follow. Elijah will be sent to the scattered Jews **before** that happens – to save them from it. Many of the saints will be with Elijah to turn the Jewish people to their God. Significantly, this story is summarised in the final three verses of the Old Testament:

*"Remember ye the law of **Moses** my servant, which I commanded unto him **in Horeb** for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you **Elijah** the prophet **before** the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, **lest** I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4v4-6).*

These are more than just prophetic facts about future events. They are expressing an important principle. Think about it. If Israel is being asked to remember the law given to Moses, **then why not send Moses?** If Moses had the right spirit when he pleaded for Israel's salvation at Horeb, then wouldn't **he** be the best one? If Moses was prepared to give his life (even his eternal life) for his people, wouldn't he be the ideal one to send? No. It's best to send someone who had to firstly learn the lesson himself. Israel needs to learn the same lesson Elijah had to learn. He firstly struggled with it. But God brought him into that wilderness and pleaded with him face to face.

We can only become a part of God's purpose when we have no strength in ourselves and when we throw off all our self sufficiency. Sometimes we will be in a position of absolute helplessness. But it is the still small voice of God's Word that will change us and enable us to help others to the Kingdom. God will also plead with the Jews in the wilderness of the peoples and plead with

them face to face (**Ezek 20v33-39**). On the way back to Israel, the Jews will come through Europe, lands where they have suffered for centuries. They will learn that all this tragedy was for a purpose. It was to bring them to Christ. Elijah will be the man to carry out that work.

The principle for us is that **we need to have the spirit Moses had** when he was at Horeb. Moses pleaded with God for the salvation of his people: "This people have sinned a great sin... Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book" (**Exod 32v30-32**). In fact he prayed this for 40 days and 40 nights (**Deut 9v25-27**). He went to "make atonement" for Israel's sin (**v30**). He pleaded with God that Israel's sins may be forgiven. We know that God does not save unrepentant people, and Moses knew this too. But Moses' prayer was how he felt. This was an extreme level of love which Moses had reached. In fact you could not get a more intense level of love than this. Moses had reached the point at which he could give his eternal life for people who hated him and who had rebelled against God. This is a level of love almost beyond what we can comprehend.

There was a meekness and a selflessness in the man Moses that gives us an insight into the greatest of all men, the Lord Jesus Christ. And surely the love of Moses is just a reflection of that which Jesus Christ has for each one of us. If Moses had that amount of love for a rebellious people, how much more does Jesus Christ love us who at least try to respond? Paul said "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (**Galatians 2v20**)

It is not surprising then that as the Old Testament comes to a close, and with the events of **Malachi 4** in mind, that we come to the gospel records. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The story of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all that he has done for us. Because that's the point. The spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ is that he gave his whole life for others. As men hated him more, he loved them more. As they sought to destroy him, he sought to save them. As men threw insults at him, he prayed for their forgiveness. This is the highest level of love. It's a love that we reach for but struggle to grasp. It is a love that we strive for, that we reach out for. This is a love that must compel us to give our whole being to save others. And not just our friends. But also those who we may feel uncomfortable with, or even those who might hate us.

We cannot force ourselves to think like this. We cannot force others to think like this. Our way of thinking must change to God's way of thinking. That is the mind of Christ. By knowing God and His Son and by meditating on their ways we begin thinking of others rather than ourselves. When we appreciate the love that God has for us and how much He wants to save us, then we will start thinking like Him. We develop a passion for doing anything we can to save others rather than serving ourselves.

No wonder when John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, he came to introduce the man Jesus Christ. He came to introduce "the glory of Yahweh", the perfect character of the Father. When "the voice" cried, "in the wilderness prepare ye the way of Yahweh", he came to provide comfort and to introduce a man who would gather the lambs in his arms (**Isa 40v1-11**). At the transfiguration we read of Moses and Elijah appearing with Christ. Both were leaders of an exodus, one past and one future. Representing the law and the prophets, they were sent by God to strengthen Jesus to hold fast to the end. No wonder that God's summary of all this was His declaration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (**Matt 17v5**)

It is Elijah who will introduce world Jewry to their Messiah. Not just to acknowledge him as king of the world and as saviour of the nation. But to the spirit of love and of kindness that is seen in his character. In fact, it is Christ's character which is that of God Himself.

One of the most moving events of all history will be when the Jews are converted to Christ. Jesus will save the Jews in the land first (**Zech 12v7**). Then it will be Elijah's role to bring the

scattered Jews back to Zion. One of the great thrills of the Kingdom will be to experience this event. The scene of Joseph and his brothers (in **Genesis 45v1-3**) is a type of what will happen with Israel and their Messiah. As we read the very first book of the Bible, God invites us to develop an emotional attachment to Israel and their Messiah. He does this through the life of Joseph. God also invites us to develop an emotional longing for the time when Israel will be saved by Christ. Again, this is something that takes time, prayer, careful study and meditation on God's Word.

The salvation of Israel in many ways parallels our own personal salvation (compare **Rom 5v10** and **Rom 11v15**). God's plan to save Israel is similar to the way in which he works with us to bring us into the Kingdom. There are difficulties and trials along the way. It all takes time. It even takes tragedy. God does whatever He can to change us and develop our characters. He is doing this with Israel and He is doing it with us.

Imagine seeing the change in the Jews as they turn to God and as they appreciate what their Messiah has done for them. Not by force, but by a pair of hands. Jesus will say, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." (**Zech 13v6**). Then out will go Elijah to bring all Jews to Zion. At last Elijah's work will find fulfillment rather than failure:

Jeremiah 31v33 "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law **in their inward parts**, and write it **in their hearts**; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (quoted in **Heb 8v8-12**)

Romans 11v26-27 "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, **when I shall take away their sins.**" (quoting **Isaiah 59v20**)

Young people, each of us can be there in that day. We can be there with Elijah. We all struggle to learn the lessons God wants us to learn. We all struggle to reach the level of love that Moses had at Horeb. We struggle to eliminate selfishness in our lives. We sometimes think that we can force people to believe in God and to live His Word in their lives. And sometimes we feel all alone, depressed and thinking only of ourselves. Sometimes we don't know where to go or where to turn. Sometimes we forget that there are thousands more who are striving for the same goal as us. Sometimes those people are closer than we think.

So like Elijah, we can come to appreciate that God wants us in His Kingdom. He wants us there so we can bring people to Christ. God has not given us the gospel to destroy us. He has not given the hope of the Kingdom to us so He can reject us. To help us to the Kingdom he has given us a multitude of friends. True friends. Eternal friends. Friends who can be with us forever, in immortality and in glory.

Our friends at SW08 and in all our ecclesias are there to guide us along the road towards God's Kingdom. Sometimes they have to carry us. And sometimes we will have to carry them. With God's help we can do it together, but we will never do it apart. So let's reach out to each other. Don't leave any behind. Make sure that everyone is included and cared for. That is the love of Christ that God wants to see in us. This is where the story of Elijah leads us. It is where every story of the Bible leads us. This is the life of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.