

ELIJAH, ELISHA, AND US

*Prophetic Shadows for the
New Testament Body*

by Matt German

The ministry of Elijah and Elisha has always fascinated me. Though most believers tend to focus on the miracles done through their hands – and there were many – it was their relationship to each other that I find most poignant, and which ought to speak to us today.

Ironically, the Scriptures don't describe this relationship in much detail. Even so, we can deduce some things based on what is recorded.

The very first encounter between them is telling in itself. First, Elijah had a clear word from Yahweh: "Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah shall you anoint to be prophet in your place" or as his successor (1 Kings 19:16b). Notice, this was a very specific word. Many prophets (and other ministers) might actually fight such a word – that they were to anoint someone to take their place. That Elijah did it and did it promptly speaks to his heart. Also significant is the fact that he'd apparently never met or even set eyes upon Elisha prior to this.

1 Kings 19:19-21 So he departed there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing, with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed over to him, and cast his mantle on him. ⁽²⁰⁾ He left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray you, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you. He said to him, Go back again; for what have I done to you? ⁽²¹⁾ He returned from following him, and took the yoke of oxen, and killed them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave to the people, and they ate. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered to him.

It's apparent from this account that Elisha immediately recognized that something profound had happened. There he was, innocently minding his own business (and tending the business of his biological father) when a strange man came by and threw his mantle over him. People today might not recognize the significance of this (and would probably call the authorities!), but Elisha understood that he was being called into relationship and ministry with Elijah – and his first

inclination was to forsake his life, his home, and the source of his livelihood and follow this man. One wonders, had Yahweh already begun to deal with him about the calling upon his life? Had he been waiting for Elijah – or someone – to show up? Was this just the watershed event he'd been anticipating for some time?

While these are interesting questions, all we really know is his response: "Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered to him." Why is this important? Because it speaks directly to Elisha's own heart condition – he was willing to be of no repute, to humble himself and submit to the authority of his new father in ministry. This despite the fact that he knew the significance of Elijah's casting of his mantle upon him. Had he not understood this, there's no way he would have killed off the source of his livelihood and walked away from his own family. This, of course, is reminiscent of Yahshua's calling of some of His own disciples, who immediately left their nets and fishing boats and followed Him (e.g., Matt. 4:18-22).

So despite the clear recognition of a calling upon his life, Elisha didn't immediately jump into the spotlight as a prophet. Rather, he ministered to and served Elijah. In fact, from this encounter until Elijah is about to be taken up from him (2 Kings 2), Elisha's name is not even mentioned again in Scripture. So he was obviously not out there pursuing his own ministry or trying to build a reputation for himself. In fact, even after Elijah was taken up, Elisha's sole reputation was as "the one who poured water on the hands of Elijah" (2 Kings 3:11). In other words, his great claim to fame up to that point was as a faithful servant to Elijah – an "apprentice" or "understudy", in modern parlance, who was by Elijah's side, learning and serving in the background.

The "bookend" to Elisha's call into ministry occurs when he finally assumes Elijah's authority:

2 Kings 2:9-10 It happened, when they had gone over, that Elijah said to Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you. Elisha said, please let a double portion of your spirit be on me. ⁽¹⁰⁾ He said, You have asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so to you; but if not, it shall not be so.

Why did Elijah consider this "a hard thing"? It was because Elisha was asking for the spiritual equivalent of the "right of the firstborn" – the double portion inheritance or blessing that rightly belonged to a man's eldest son (see Deut. 21:17, for example). Unlike a natural born son, Elisha had no legal claim to that inheritance. All he had was a relationship that he had faithfully pursued. It was more than enough.

2 Kings 2:11-15 It happened, as they still went on, and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both apart; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. ⁽¹²⁾ Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen of it! He saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and tore them in two pieces. ⁽¹³⁾ He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of the Jordan. ⁽¹⁴⁾ He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and struck the waters, and said, Where is Yahweh, the Elohim (God) of Elijah? and when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha went over. ⁽¹⁵⁾ When the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho over against him saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah does rest on Elisha. They came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

Notice that Elisha instinctively referred to Elijah here as "my father, my father". This was not some desperate, last-ditch attempt to garner favor – this was a pure expression of his heart toward his ministry father. It was when he "saw him no more" that he rent his own clothes in two, a sign of anguish at losing his spiritual father but also a prophetic act. In tearing his own clothes and immediately taking up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, he was declaring that his own ministry, under the full anointing of Elisha, had begun in earnest.

Although Elijah had cast his mantle upon Elisha at their first meeting, Elisha had obviously not kept it – it had been a symbolic or ceremonial gesture. Until Elijah was gone, Elisha had no right to wear his mantle or operate in his full authority. Nevertheless, had Elisha not responded to that initial gesture, he never would have had the right to take up his mantle later. Though there were "sons of the prophets" around, none of them had the right to Elijah's mantle because none of them were his sons in ministry. None had walked in relationship with him.

I believe that Elijah in this passage foreshadowed Yahshua and Elisha foreshadowed the Body of Messiah – and in particular the 5-fold ministry. As he was taken up or ascended, Elijah gave the mantle of his ministry to Elisha. This, of course, parallels what we are told in the book of Ephesians; speaking of Messiah, we're told that "when He had ascended, He gave gifts of / to men" (Eph. 4:8).

Remember also that Elijah had prophesied to Elisha that he would only receive the double portion anointing "if you see me when I am taken from you" (v10). Compare this to Yahshua's ascension:

Acts 1:4-11 Being assembled together with them, He charged them, "Don't depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which you heard from me. ⁽⁵⁾ For John indeed

baptized in water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ⁽⁶⁾ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, "Lord, are you now restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁽⁷⁾ He said to them, "It isn't for you to know times or seasons which the Father has set within His own authority. ⁽⁸⁾ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth." ⁽⁹⁾ When He had said these things, as they were looking, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ⁽¹⁰⁾ While they were looking steadfastly into the heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white clothing, ⁽¹¹⁾ who also said, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the heaven? This Yahshua, who was received up from you into the heaven will come back in the same way as you saw Him going into the heaven."

Just as Elisha saw Elijah taken from him, the original apostles – those who had walked with Him in ministry – watched as Yahshua was taken up from them. One key distinction, however, is that He will come back the same way He left. When the sons of the prophets shamed Elisha into seeking after Elijah after he was taken (2 Ki. 2:16-18), they didn't find him.

After Yahshua's ascension His disciples diligently waited for the promised baptism of the Spirit.

Acts 2:1-4 Now when the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ⁽²⁾ Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ⁽³⁾ Tongues like fire appeared and were distributed to them, and sat on each one of them. ⁽⁴⁾ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This singular event launched the disciples into a new realm of ministry that they'd never experienced before. And even though Yahshua had told them to expect it – and they had been praying diligently and were in "one accord" – when it happened it was still a sudden occurrence that took everyone by surprise.

I believe that the "sound from heaven as of rushing mighty wind" (Acts 2:1-4) was the spiritual counterpart to Elijah's mantle falling to the earth at his "catching away". This was the setting in of the apostles and others into their full ministry.

When Elijah was taken up, the sons of the prophets recognized that Elisha had received his anointing, declaring that "the spirit of Elijah does rest on Elisha." This brings up an interesting question. When the "sons of the prophets" (those born into organized religion, who stand afar off) see us coming,

do they say the same thing? Do they recognize the Spirit of Messiah resting upon us? Yahshua promised that those who believe on Him would do even "greater works" than those He Himself had done (John 14:12). This promise of greater works is, I believe, the New Testament equivalent of the "double portion" anointing under which Elisha operated. Are we operating under it?

'Apostles and the Apostolic' – a Primer

Change is coming to the Body of Messiah; that seems apparent. However, Yahweh has made it abundantly clear to me that true change won't come through the pastoral anointing. Rather, it will come through the apostolic anointing coupled with prophetic vision. What I mean by this is that it will take apostles and apostolic people, joined with prophets and prophetic people, in order to bring about this change.

'Apostle' and 'apostolic' are terms that scare and/or confuse a lot of believers. This article is not meant to be an exhaustive study but just a "primer" on the subject. Both 'apostle' and 'apostolic' come from the Greek word *apóstolos* – a delegate, ambassador, or messenger; literally, 'he that is sent'. It comes from another Greek word, *apostέlla*, "to send out".

Yahshua is identified in Scripture as the "Apostle and High Priest" of our faith (Hebr. 3:1). When He announced His ministry, He said, "The Spirit of the Sovereign Yahweh is on me, Because He anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim release to the captives, Recovering of sight to the blind, To deliver those who are crushed" (Luke 4:18). He further said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34).

While the original 12 apostles held unique Kingdom positions, there are a number of other men identified in the New Testament as apostles (e.g., Paul and Barnabas). In fact, the apostle is one of the 5-fold ministry gifts, given by Messiah for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the Body.

Eph 4:11-13 He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ⁽¹²⁾ for the perfecting of the saints, to the work of serving, to the building up of the body of Messiah; ⁽¹³⁾ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of Yahweh, to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah

Contrary to popular disbelief, the office of apostle did not pass away with the 1st century disciples. It is an enduring office because of an enduring need. The Body is not yet perfect, nor has it attained the "unity of the faith" nor grown "to the measure

of the stature of the fullness of Messiah." All of the 5-fold ministry gifts are still needed in the Body.

What do apostles do?

The apostle is a foundational ministry, planting local assemblies and laying the proper foundation; overseeing and strengthening local assemblies; developing leaders; ordaining ministries; supervising and coordinating ministries; managing crisis (continually set things in order); and networking with other ministries.

As it is applied to a local assembly, 'apostolic' indicates a ministry sent and established by the sovereign will of Yahweh and which is characterized by a strong sense of mission, Biblical order, and strength, stability, and balance. Yahweh's Spirit is apostolic; Yahshua was and is apostolic. Yahweh's people as a whole are called to be 'apostolic', though everyone certainly is not an apostle (1 Cor. 12:28-29).

Some final thoughts: we're warned in Scripture to beware of false apostles and false prophets in the end-times. Why would we have to be watchful for the counterfeit if there weren't the genuine?! In addition, like any other ministry gift, no man takes the office of apostleship to himself; he's called by Yahweh to the office, and the proof of his ministry will be in tangible fruit. Paul said that the people he'd positively impacted were the sign or proof of his apostleship (e.g., 1 Cor. 9:2). In addition, other men and women in ministry will recognize those who are operating as 'sent ones' (apostles).

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Lion of Judah Apostolic Ministry Center

The Father has given me a vision to establish an apostolic ministry center. More than just somewhere to gather on a weekly basis for worship, this will be a place that will provide 24-hour ministry to those in need. In addition, it will be geared towards raising up and sending out ministers, as well as being equipped to host the annual feasts of Yahweh.

This is a big undertaking. We're anticipating the need for 30+ acres in order to accommodate this vision and are currently looking for the land and trusting Yahweh for the resources to accomplish it. Please keep this endeavor in your prayers.

About Lion of Judah Family Worship Center (LJFWC)

LJFWC is an apostolic-prophetic ministry dedicated to preaching the Gospel, making disciples of the Kingdom, and manifesting Yahweh's glory in our lives.

For more information, please take a few minutes to visit our website at: www.4lionofjudah.com or you can call us at 256-489-3399.

Recent Sermons

- State of the Union – 2009 (01/03/09)
- Biblical Meditation (01/10/09)
- Who's Got the Fire? (3 parts) (01/24/09 – 02/07/09)

Visit our website for all the latest teaching & preaching from the ministry of Lion of Judah Family Worship Center – www.4LionofJudah.com. Most recent sermons are available for immediate download in mp3 format.

Recommended Tool of the Month

You Have Not Many Fathers by Mark Hanby. This is a powerful book that speaks to an issue virtually ignored in the Body of Messiah today – ministry relationship:

"The foundation of spiritual inheritance in the Kingdom of God is the relationship of a father and son. Those in ministry today must develop the heart of a father and raise up a generation of sons and daughters in a 'double portion' of anointing. You Have Not Many Fathers serves to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, least I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Available at hanby.org for \$10.00.

Winter Firestorm 2009

hosted by

*The Olive Branch of Huntsville &
Lion of Judah Family Worship Center*

with special guest Jimmie Black

Friday, March 13th – 7pm

Saturday, March 14th – 10am and 2pm

Make plans now to attend!!!

Call or write for details.

Additional gatherings in 2009:

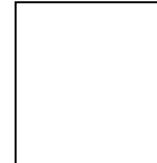
- * Spring Manna-Fest: April 10th – 11th
- * Pentecost Worship Weekend: May 29th – 31st
- * Feast of Tabernacles: October 3rd – 10th

Watch this space or check our website in the future for details.

Contact us:

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