



INTRODUCTION

The last lesson closed with a depressed Elijah being sent on a mission to anoint two new kings: Jehu and Hazael, and to anoint Elisha to succeed him as prophet. How do you think Elijah left that meeting?

ELIJAH CALLS ELISHA

1 Kings 19:19-21 ¹⁹ So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. ²⁰ Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. “Let me kiss my father and mother good-bye,” he said, “and then I will come with you.” “Go back,” Elijah replied. “What have I done to you?” ²¹ So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant.

1.) Having twelve yoke of oxen likely meant that Elisha and his family were well to do. What do you think Elijah thought when Elisha requested to return to his father and mother? Do you think his perception of Elijah changed after his fellowship meal / sacrifice?

Luke 9:61-62 Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

2.) Some have said that Elijah was looking for a volunteer not a draftee. Describe ways a congregation might “rope” people into serving. What are ways we can seek and promote volunteers instead?

3.) Elisha left behind the advantages of his highborn home to take up the call of full-time ministry. Give some Biblical and contemporary illustrations of the same.

HISTORICAL INTERLUDE – 1 KINGS 20

BEN-HADAD ATTACKS SAMARIA

1 Kings 20:1-12 Now Ben-Hadad king of Aram mustered his entire army. Accompanied by thirty-two kings with their horses and chariots, he went up and besieged Samaria and attacked it. ² He sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, saying, “This is what Ben-Hadad says: ³ ‘Your silver and gold are mine, and the best of your wives and children are mine.’ ”

⁴ The king of Israel answered, “Just as you say, my lord the king. I and all I have are yours.” ⁵ The messengers came again and said, “This is what Ben-Hadad says: ‘I sent to demand your silver and gold, your wives and your children. ⁶ But about this time tomorrow I am going to send my officials to search your palace and the houses of your officials. They will seize everything you value and carry it away.’ ”

⁷ The king of Israel summoned all the elders of the land and said to them, “See how this man is looking for trouble! When he sent for my wives and my children, my silver and my gold, I did not refuse him.” ⁸ The elders and the people all answered, “Don’t listen to him or agree to his demands.” ⁹ So he replied to Ben-Hadad’s messengers, “Tell my lord the king, ‘Your servant will do all you demanded the first time, but this demand I cannot meet.’ ” They left and took the answer back to Ben-Hadad.

¹⁰ Then Ben-Hadad sent another message to Ahab: “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if enough dust remains in Samaria to give each of my men a handful.” ¹¹ The king of Israel answered, “Tell him: ‘One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off.’ ” ¹² Ben-Hadad heard this message while he and the kings were drinking in their tents, and he ordered his men: “Prepare to attack.” So they prepared to attack the city.

1.) Where did Ahab look for solutions in this national calamity?

THE LORD GIVES AHAB VICTORY

1 Kings 20:13-22

¹³ Meanwhile a prophet came to Ahab king of Israel and announced, “This is what the LORD says: ‘Do you see this vast army? I will give it into your hand today, and then you will know that I am the LORD.’ ” ¹⁴ “But who will do this?” asked Ahab. The prophet replied, “This is what the LORD says: ‘The young officers of the provincial commanders will do it.’ ” “And who will start the battle?” he asked. The prophet answered, “You will.” ¹⁵ So Ahab summoned the young officers of the provincial commanders, 232 men. Then he assembled the rest of the Israelites, 7,000 in all. ¹⁶ They set out at noon while Ben-Hadad and the 32 kings allied with him were in their tents getting drunk. ¹⁷ The young officers of the provincial commanders went out first.

Now Ben-Hadad had dispatched scouts, who reported, “Men are advancing from Samaria.” ¹⁸ He said, “If they have come out for peace, take them alive; if they have come out for war, take them alive.” ¹⁹ The young officers of the provincial commanders marched out of the city with the army behind them ²⁰ and each one struck down his opponent. At that, the Arameans fled, with the Israelites in pursuit. But Ben-Hadad king of Aram escaped on horseback with some of his horsemen. ²¹ The king of Israel advanced and overpowered the horses and chariots and inflicted heavy losses on the Arameans. ²² Afterward, the prophet came to the king of Israel and said, “Strengthen your position and see what must be done, because next spring the king of Aram will attack you again.”

1.) The LORD is the main character of Scripture, and his salvation plan is the plot. What is surprising about his intervention in this episode?

1 Kings 20:13-22

²³ Meanwhile, the officials of the king of Aram advised him, “Their gods are gods of the hills. That is why they were too strong for us. But if we fight them on the plains, surely we will be stronger than they.” ²⁴ Do this: Remove all the kings from their commands and replace them with other officers. ²⁵ You must also raise an army like the one you lost—horse for horse and chariot for chariot—so we can fight Israel on the plains. Then surely we will be stronger than they.” He agreed with them and acted accordingly.

²⁶ The next spring Ben-Hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. ²⁷ When the Israelites were also mustered and given provisions, they marched out to meet them. The Israelites camped opposite them like two small flocks of goats, while the Arameans covered the countryside. ²⁸ The man of God came up and told the king of Israel, “This is what the LORD says: ‘Because the Arameans think the LORD is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the LORD.’ ”

²⁹ For seven days they camped opposite each other, and on the seventh day the battle was joined. The Israelites inflicted a hundred thousand casualties on the Aramean foot soldiers in one day. ³⁰ The rest of them escaped to the city of Aphek, where the wall collapsed on twenty-seven thousand of them. And Ben-Hadad fled to the city and hid in an inner room. ³¹ His officials said to him, “Look, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful. Let us go to the king of Israel with sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads. Perhaps he will spare your life.”

³² Wearing sackcloth around their waists and ropes around their heads, they went to the king of Israel and said, “Your servant Ben-Hadad says: ‘Please let me live.’ ” The king answered, “Is he still alive? He is my brother.” ³³ The men took this as a good sign and were quick to pick up his word. “Yes, your brother Ben-Hadad!” they said. “Go and get him,” the king said. When Ben-Hadad came out, Ahab had him come up into his chariot. ³⁴ “I will return the cities my father took from your father,” Ben-Hadad offered. “You may set up your own market areas in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.” Ahab said, “On the basis of a treaty I will set you free.” So he made a treaty with him, and let him go.

2.) Once again, the LORD rescues Israel. What was his revealed rationale on this occasion?

3.) What good reputation did the kings of Israel have? Consider our own public reputation as individuals and as congregation, synod, etc.

4.) Evaluate Ahab’s reaction to Ben-Hadad’s messengers and terms of peace.

1 Kings 20:35-43

³⁵ By the word of the LORD one of the sons of the prophets said to his companion, “Strike me with your weapon,” but the man refused. ³⁶ So the prophet said, “Because you have not obeyed the LORD, as soon as you leave me a lion will kill you.” And after the man went away, a lion found him and killed him. ³⁷ The

prophet found another man and said, "Strike me, please." So the man struck him and wounded him.³⁸ Then the prophet went and stood by the road waiting for the king. He disguised himself with his headband down over his eyes.³⁹ As the king passed by, the prophet called out to him, "Your servant went into the thick of the battle, and someone came to me with a captive and said, 'Guard this man. If he is missing, it will be your life for his life, or you must pay a talent of silver.'"⁴⁰ While your servant was busy here and there, the man disappeared." "That is your sentence," the king of Israel said. "You have pronounced it yourself."

⁴¹ Then the prophet quickly removed the headband from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.⁴² He said to the king, "This is what the LORD says: 'You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore it is your life for his life, your people for his people.'"⁴³ Sullen and angry, the king of Israel went to his palace in Samaria.

5.) God gives Ahab a vivid "object lesson" in which he condemns himself by countermanding the commonly accepted rules of war (cf. Nathan's rebuke of David).

PRAYER