

## Talk 1 - 1 Kings 16.29-17.6

- Firstly, some principles for ministry which remain the same in every generation and every culture.
- Secondly, my mistakes and the mistakes of my church. Wisdom is to learn from the mistakes and the pain of others so that we avoid the pain for ourselves.
- Thirdly, the success of the ancients.

Come with me to look at Elijah...

### 1. Elijah's background

Ahab has become king in the northern kingdom of Israel. He was a man who lived in constant disobedience to the Lord. He lived around 870 BC and reigned for 22 years.

- He married a pagan woman, daughter of king of Sidon. [17.31.]

They were Phoenicians. Her father was a Baal worshipper, so was she.

- Ahab built a temple to Baal in Samaria, and put an altar in it. [17.32.]
- He made an Asherah pole dedicated to the fertility goddess Asherah and consort of Baal. [17.33]
- He had Jericho rebuilt despite the curse that Joshua had put on the city. [17.34]

Elijah arrives on the scene, the Tishbite from Tishbe in Gilead. That is the entire introduction that we have to a significant man. We know nothing apart from this about his background but someone must have taught him about radical discipleship.

- Being prepared to be single if that was the Lord's call on his life.
- Being prepared to go anywhere for the Lord, wherever he might call.

See Mt 16.24 and Jn 12.24

But when we meet him for the first time, Elijah is a mature prophet...

### 2. Elijah is alone

This was God's call on his life. It is not normal because it is not good for a man to be alone [see Genesis 2.18] and two are better than one [see Ecclesiastes 4.12].

Wives need to support the ministry of their husbands, and congregations need to continue to support anyone they send out from their church as a missionary so that they never feel alone

### 3. Elijah serves the Lord over many years

The drought lasts for 3 years. Not much happened during that time and he needed to keep his soul alive.

Here is a list of ways to keep our souls alive in ministry.

- Intimacy with God. See John 15.1-4.
- Daily devotional time.
- Prayer with others.
- Prayer supporters who will faithfully pray for us.
- Fellowship where we hear what the Lord has been doing for others.
- Worship.
- Holy Communion. See 1 Corinthians 11.26.
- Reading: obviously the Bible but also to feed our souls on the experience of others who will inspire our faith.
- Teaching. We need to have the humility to sit at the feet of others very often. If we use the internet to listen to other preachers then we need to be very careful about who we choose.

#### **4. Elijah's 'fruitless' ministry**

At the end of 3 years as Elijah looks back to assess his ministry not a lot has happened.

- He has been beside the stream and did nothing...
- He has been looked after by the widow in Zarephath.
- He has seen her come to faith.
- He has raised her son from the dead.

All of that must have been very encouraging, but that left a lot of time when nothing was happening at all.

Fruitfulness is for the Lord to produce through us. We are simply to walk with him and live close to him, and he will see to the rest.

#### **Conclusion**

Has your congregation sent anyone away to plant a church somewhere else?

What are you doing to support and encourage them?

If you haven't sent anyone away yet are you able to identify someone whom you could encourage to go?

#### **Talk 2 - 1 Kings 17.7-24**

One of the loveliest things about belonging to the Lord is that we simply don't know what is going to happen next. He constantly surprises us. Elijah must have been surprised when he is suddenly called to become a cross cultural missionary.

In Zarephath he will experience a different culture from the one that he is used to. The language is different, the way of life is different, the religion is different. Always, God has had a world vision.

'You are my witnesses' is not just in Acts 1.8, but they come first 4 times in Isaiah 43.9-12; 44.8. God is a missionary God.

Missionary work and evangelism should be at the forefront of the minds of those who belong to the Lord.

And yet sometimes people are being prevented from responding to a missionary call.

- Sometimes because of the selfishness of parents. We want those people to believe but we don't want to lose you.
- Sometimes we may be reluctant as a church leader to give away some of our most talented people.
- Sometimes we may despise a particular people group like Jonah and the people of Nineveh who were the enemies of the Israelites.
- Sometimes there may be historical enmity which many in our community have not forgotten.
- Sometimes there may be serious sin in a particular community and we feel disgust for them.
- Sometimes we know of missionary work which was done so badly that we feel embarrassed to try and do it ourselves.

What lessons have we learned about encouraging people to consider cross cultural missionary work?

1. Start now. Don't delay any longer.

2. Preach on the subject

- God preached on the subject.
- see Isaiah 6.8: I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send?'
- Jesus drew attention to the issues, even prophesying that there would be those who would carry his Gospel around the world. See Mt 24.14.
- It was 'his dying wish'. See Mt 28.19
- It was his departing promise. See Acts 1.8
- It is continued by the apostles and the apostolic church [see Col 1.23]
- It is the driving vision of the church in every age. See Rev 5.9: with people 'from every tribe and language and people and nation' standing before the throne...

3. Look for people

Pray that they will identify themselves and that you will be able to identify them.

- They will already have an interest in other people groups.
- You'll hear them pray for other people groups with compassion and concern.
- They may already have shown that they have an ability to cross cultures simply through the way that they relate to people of other ethnicities within our existing congregation.
- Maybe they have already got an ability to speak other languages.
- Maybe they are already married to a person from another ethnic background.

4. Pray for other people groups in public services and in prayer meetings and in your own devotional times.

Who are the strangers sojourners in your community? Are they being overlooked because people are resentful towards them, or afraid of them or they despise them?

It is an Old Testament and a New Testament command that we should care for the migrants. See Ex 22.21; Lev 19.34; Matthew 25.35; Rom 12.13; Heb 13.2

5. Tell the stories that inspire

There are plenty of biblical ones. See Acts 19.28/29.

## 6. Nurture interest

Invite anyone who feels even the slightest calling to come together to explore the issues, to talk about a call, to look at information on organisations, countries in need, and doors of opportunity that are open.

## 7. Emphasise the cost

Jesus never invited someone to follow him without telling them of the cost involved.

- It may mean learning a new language.
- It will certainly mean crossing cultures.
- It will certainly mean leaving

Is it practical for you to encourage missionary activity from your church? Will you preach about it at least twice in the next 6 months, and begin to look for people to go?

## **Talk 3 - 1 Kings 18.16-40**

Let's look at 2 men who experienced severe spiritual opposition.

### **1. Job.**

Why did Satan bother with this man?

- Because he was so influential.
- Job 1.3: 'He was the greatest man among all the people of the east'. Damage him and you'll damage the cause of the Lord in that entire region.

### **2. Peter**

- See Lk 22.31: 'Satan has desired to sift you as wheat'.
- Bring down Peter who was one of the key disciples and all the others would be discouraged, dispirited and defeated.

Elijah has gone from the comfort of the widow's home in Zarephath where everything was being provided for him and where he was protected and secure, to the conflict with the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of his consort Asherah on the top of Mt Carmel.

Over the years pastors and missionaries have faced some familiar problems which are a result of the attacks of the evil one.

### **1. Conflict amongst leaders**

Isn't this surprising? We all love the Lord and want to see his kingdom thrive. Yet leaders have so much trouble working together. At the root of the problem is that we are competitive, and at the heart of our competitiveness is pride.

Many years ago I was taught this principle that the best leaders are those who have learned to submit to the leadership of others. See Eph 5.21.

## **2. Sexual temptation**

Sexual temptation has caused problems for multitudes of church leaders.

- Ministry to women needs to be done by women.
- Never be alone with another woman either in car, home, study, church.
- Keep your own marriage relationship sweet and active. Paul is remarkably direct for a single man regarding the physical relationship between husband and wife. See 1 Corinthians 7.3-5. Why would a man or a woman want to look elsewhere if their sexual relationship is satisfying and pleasurable.

## **3. Discouragement**

- We may need to pray daily for the Lord to encourage us.
- We may need to recruit other people to pray for us.
- We will need people who will be a Barnabas to us. When you find people like that then harness them for it's a very special gift.
- We will be helped by those who are willing to visit us.

## **4. Loneliness**

One of the areas of pride for pastors and missionaries is that they boast to themselves that they can cope. But we need others to stand with us just as much as everyone else..

## **5. Financial corruption**

One of the biggest problems in the world is financial corruption and tragically it is also found in the church. There need to be procedures put in place so that money can not be taken dishonestly.

Absolute honesty and complete integrity are necessary where this is concerned.

## **6. Illness and accident**

Over the years we have offered specific prayer for safety and protection for ourselves and for our congregations.

The Scriptures are clear about our authority in the spiritual realm and over the powers of darkness. See Lk 10.20; Mt 18.18; James 4.7.

## **7. Desire for better prospects for ourselves or our children**

It is easy to be distracted from our ministry when we see others around us who are making economic progress and we are still poor and struggling to educate our children.

## **8. Short term ministry**

Research has shown that the maximum impact of a person's ministry comes somewhere between 7 and 12 years. There are sometimes good reasons for short term ministry:

- Giving someone an opportunity to gain experience in a particular field of ministry.

- A church planting setting where a person has been sent in to establish a work as a pioneer and then for that to be taken over by someone who will build on what they have started.

But normally the effectiveness of a ministry grows and grows over the years, particularly when/if it has been in the same area.

## 9. Success

How on earth can this be a problem? Because success when it is badly handled can lead to pride, and pride can lead to a demanding and domineering attitude.

What steps do you need to take to protect yourself spiritually from attack? How should you attempt to protect those who have gone from your congregation to work elsewhere?

## Talk 4 - 1 Kings 19.1-18

We talked last time about the dangers of success, and the way that the enemy of our souls can turn it against us as a cause for pride...

cf. 1 Corinthians 10.12: If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall...

But that was not Elijah's problem. He was faced by something else. The cost of the confrontation on mount Carmel had been immense. He was totally drained by it... completely exhausted. There was the controlling of his doubts by the exercise of faith. There was the adrenaline rush of seeing the answer of God. There was the cost of dealing with the prophets of Baal. That must have been awful. But just when he thought that it was all over... What will Ahab and Jezebel do in the light of what has happened...? There is only one thing that they can do, isn't there...? Repent and turn to the Lord...

Elijah had demonstrated where the truth lies. He had shown that Baal was powerless in contrast to the God of Israel. The outcome of the contest was absolutely convincing. No answer from Baal, but the God of Israel answers by fire. Here is the proof, what more do they need....? They need a believing heart...

cf. 18.2: May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of my prophets...

Elijah has got 24 hours to live, if Jezebel gets her way...

Elijah has got no emotional energy remaining, nor does he have any spiritual reserves either, he is completely spent...

A new contest follows the first but he simply can't face it and so he runs...

Is he at fault..? Should he feel guilty..?

Hasn't he stopped drawing on the resources of the Lord..?

If he had prayed wouldn't he have found that the power of God would have surged into his body and he would have been filled with confidence and ready to fight the next battle...

Had he stopped believing that the Lord could help him...?

Does he need to listen to a good sermon on drawing on the resources of God when in difficult circumstances like this...?

No...

Just look what God does with him...

Elijah has arrived in Beersheba which is as far south as he could go before hitting the desert... the Negev. Then he goes another day's journey into the desert. Jezebel would be hard put to it to find him here. He prays to die.

I am no better than my ancestors...

I/ we won and now I've run away...

Even many of my ancestors weren't that cowardly..

'Take my life'... I really don't mind if you do..

Better that than the life of a coward, of a runaway..

Faced 850 prophets... won... but one woman and he runs away...

What's wrong with the man...?

He's tired...

That's what's wrong with him...

He needs some rest...

Does the Lord wake him up to tell him off...? Does he give him a row...? Come on Elijah pull yourself together. We've done better than this. I'm expecting more from you than to see you give in like this and run away...

We have a practical/spiritual God...

We have a responsibility to look after ourselves if we are going to give a lifetime of service and ministry to the Lord. That is not selfishness, it is stewardship of our lives and our bodies...

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE TWO TOP PRIORITIES FOR LOOKING AFTER OURSELVES IN MINISTRY?**

### **1. Rest**

It is not a sin to be tired. If we have been serving the Lord at full stretch then we will be tired. People make demands of us and we are depleted by that.

cf. Jesus was aware that something/power had gone out of him when he healed the woman with the continual haemorrhage.

cf. Mk 5.30...

When we have been praying with people, leading services, preaching, counselling, pastoring, it is costly. Especially if we have an introvert personality and we are shy by nature then we will not find it easy to be in the company of other people all the time. We will need time to ourselves and will need space to recover.

Here is God seeing the need that Elijah has and he leaves him to sleep...

In fact he has two long refreshing sleeps...

Are you sleep deprived...? Are you getting enough sleep or are you trying to work late into the nights and then in early mornings too...?

It is not a sin to be tired, but tiredness produces sin...

- not sharp thinking..
- less self-control..
- irritable and impatient..

If I were to ask you whether you live by the 10 commandments you would answer me immediately and say that you do...

What do you do about the Sabbath...?

For most pastors the Sabbath is the busiest day in the week. They are with people for a large part of the day. They will preach, sometimes several times. They may travel from church to church, and have to hurry in order not to be late. They will lead services, they will pray with people, they will be a pastor to their people. Is that a Sabbath for the pastor? Of course not..

So what day do you have as a Sabbath...? What do you do with it...?

- The Lord created the heavens and the earth in 6 days and then he rested on the Sabbath... he then made the day holy... he separated it out from the other days and made it special and different...
- Some say, but now that I am a Christian every day is a Sabbath, every day is the Lord's day...

I enjoy intimacy with him all the time, I don't need to take a special day in order to nurture my relationship with the Lord...

- But the Lord hasn't cancelled the 7<sup>th</sup> day... in fact he has chosen to live by it himself...

cf. manna in the wilderness...

What happened...? They had manna for 6 days of the week. They couldn't keep the manna over night because by the next morning it had rotted, and they had to go out and get a fresh supply every morning. Except on the day before the Sabbath. They went and collected double the amount and it kept over the next morning. Moses then told the people not to go out on the Sabbath in order to collect manna because there wouldn't be any.

- but the people went anyway, but there wasn't any there...
- cf. Ex 16.23....

God lives by his own standard...

Oh, but that's the law of the OT and we're under the new covenant... were NT people..

Yes we are...

Isn't that wonderful...

Has God done away with the need for a Sabbath...?

It was a constant argument between Jesus and the Pharisees in particular...

cf. Mk 2.27: Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath...

That's completely the wrong way round...

Yes it is..

But whilst the Pharisees had got the Sabbath out of balance, that doesn't mean that God has done away with the Sabbath. In fact in the NT God lives by the Sabbath too.

cf. crucifixion...

Jesus was dead and buried before sunset on Friday.

Why didn't God raise Jesus on Saturday?

Because it was the Sabbath. He didn't raise Jesus until the first day of the week... the Sunday.

God lives by his own principles in OT and NT..

We cannot do less...

- Jesus ensured that his disciples had rest..

cf. Mark 6.31: Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest..

- In English the commandment concerning the Sabbath takes 96 words...

The commandments concerning stealing and adultery and killing only take 4 or 5 words..

Why did God need to use so many more words...?

Because he knew that we'd argue with him about it...

- How dare we break such a clear commandment of God...

### **SO WHEN IS YOUR SABBATH.... WHEN DO YOU TAKE IT AND HOW DO YOU TAKE IT...?**

Some pastors tell me that they are much too busy to be able to take a sabbath each week..

There's a simple answer to that...

Somehow they are doing something that the Lord is not calling them to do because he has given them a 6 day working week and a day to rest. If they are working 7 days then either they are being lazy on some of the other days or they are doing some things that the Lord never ever called them to do, and they are doing it to please themselves...

If God lives by a rhythm of 6 days' work and 1 day rest, then don't you think that we should live by the same standard...? How dare we do anything less than this...?

What would that look like...no emails, no phone, no visits, no preparation, no work. It will look like a day to rest. It will look like spending time with your spouse. It will look like reading something that will do your soul some good.

It may be criticised by some members of your congregation, but if you live by this principle then you will be their pastor for longer than you would be otherwise. They may want you to work yourself to

death. If they criticise you for having a Sabbath then they don't love you. They don't want the best for you. They are looking at your ministry through their own selfish eyes.

The devil certainly wants you to work yourself to death, and the sooner the better, but the Lord...

cf. Ps 127.2: in vain you rise up early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for he grants sleep to those he loves...

## 2. Food and drink

What is interesting in the way that the Lord deals with Elijah is that he also provides him with food to eat because he is concerned that the journey which he wants him to undertake will be too much for him unless he gets the nourishment that he needs...

Once again God is being practically spiritual with Elijah...

Some people over the years have treated their bodies as though they are the enemy. It is right that they needed to be tamed and mastered because they have appetites which will take control of us if we do not control them...

cf. 1 Corinthians 9.27: I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others I myself will not be disqualified for the prize...

But our bodies are not evil...

They are to be treated with respect and honour..

cf. 1 Corinthians 6.19-20: Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price.

Therefore honour God with your body.

Yes they may be sacrificed for others, if we choose to do that, and it is necessary, but generally we are required to look after our bodies and treat them well..

Once again this is not selfishness, but stewardship...

We want to retain a healthy body with the aim of serving the Lord into our old age..

## 3. Emotional wellbeing [rest, physical health]

We are human beings...

Some of us in our pride have begun to think that others may be human beings but that we are not, We are not able to rise above being human...

We cannot...

Part of our humanity is our emotions. All of us have them.

- Elijah could not confront the prophets of Baal without having his emotions fully engaged...

He was not there on Mount Carmel completely unengaged emotionally with what was going on...

- Elijah could not trust God without being somewhat on edge as to whether or not God was going to do what he trusted he would do...

Faith and trust usually contain an element of doubt which we then have to wrestle away...

Will God do what he has promised... have I heard him clearly... am I being obedient to him...

- When the adrenalin rush is over there is an anti-climax... this is normal...

Elijah has not sinned, he is just being human..

- in contrast to what has just happened everything else looks ordinary... mundane... every day...
- life is back to normal...
- after such a stunning victory it was hard to hold everything in perspective..

Elijah has to bring the events of Mount Carmel and the outcome of those events and interpret them and integrate them into his thinking...

Because after it is all over he is still thinking the way that he was thinking before..  
He has not yet fully understood the importance of what happened on the mountain..  
He is still believing some distorted and untrue things...

Listen to his prayer twice...

vv.10 and 14...

He got it wrong twice...

= I have been very zealous for the Lord God almighty...

This is the only part of his prayer that is correct...

= the Israelites have rejected your covenant broken down your altars and put your prophets to death with the sword....

Wait a minute, Elijah...

This is the way that it was before Carmel, but since Carmel they have returned to the Lord...  
Don't you remember them shouting out, the Lord he is God, the Lord he is God...?  
Don't you remember that on your instructions they took the prophets of Baal down to the Kishon valley and they were all killed there...?  
How is it possible that you have overlooked this...?

= I am the only one left...

Wait a minute Elijah, only a few days ago you met up with Obadiah who had hidden 100 prophets in a cave...

He told you all about that...

see 18.4...

What is this... are you having a pity party when you say that you are the only one left...?  
You're not seeing straight...

= they are trying to kill me...

Who precisely Elijah...?

There is only one person who is trying to kill you and that's Jezebel...  
It isn't the people of Israel who are trying to kill you because they've turned back to the Lord..  
It isn't the prophets of Baal who are trying to kill you because they are dead...

Just get a grip on your panic, on your fear and on your emotional health..  
You're letting it slip...

All of us have depressive moments when we don't think properly...  
Some of us have depressive or melancholic personalities...  
Our cups are half empty not half full...

cf. Elijah: 1 Kings 19.4: I am no better than my ancestors..  
cf. Jonah: 4.3: Take away my life for it is better for me to die than to live..  
cf. Psalm 42.6: My soul is downcast within me..  
cf. Jer 15.10: Alas my mother that you gave me birth...

Where are we going to go for emotional refreshment...?  
This is the place... Horeb...

Do you have a place where you go for emotional refreshment...?

Here in the solitude Elijah meets with the Lord again...  
This is the Lord who was with him at the Cherith stream, and in Zarephath, and on Zarnel, and now  
on Horeb...

When things start to get distorted we need our spouses and our families...  
We need our friends and the church...  
But most of all in order to bring the mind back into balance we need intimacy with the Lord...

That is what Elijah has here...

It was that perspective that Jesus repeatedly went to check on...

See Mt 14.23: he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray...

See Mk 1.35: very early in the morning while it was still dark Jesus got up, left the house and went  
off to a solitary place where he prayed..

See Lk 22.41: Jesus withdrew about a stone's throw beyond his disciples, knelt down and prayed...

As he begins to look at things through the eyes of the Lord, so Elijah gains a brand new perspective that he'd not seen before...

God surprises him as he surprises us so very often...

- Hazael king of Aram..  
Why would that be of interest to him...?  
For two reasons..  
One: Aram had been an enemy to Israel...  
Two: because the Lord is God of the nations and not just of Israel..

- Jehu is to be king of Israel...

Ahab has been causing havoc but now his days are numbered.

- Elisha is to be the successor to Elijah..

Absolutely essential that when one prophet finished his ministry that there was another one waiting in the wings in order to continue bringing the Lord's word to the nation..

- 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal...

You thought you were alone, but you weren't..

You had no need to feel so depressed...

you were looking at everything through your own eyes rather than through mine..

## **Conclusion**

We need God's perspective on the ministry which he has given to us..  
we need God's perspective on our nation.... and our world...

Conduct a review of the way that you are looking after yourself physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. How are you going to keep yourself accountable, and those for whom you are responsible?

## **Talk 5 - 1 Kings 19.15-21**

### **Introduction**

Elijah is concerned about lots of things..

- He's been zealous..
- The Israelites have not been zealous...
- They've been particularly rebellious..
- Elijah is the only one left...
- His life is on the line...

He truly has been an excellent prophet...

A man to be admired, studied, imitated...

If we lived like him we would not go far wrong and would have fabulous ministries...

cf. Mal 4.5: the Messiah isn't going to come until Elijah has re-appeared...  
or at least an Elijah...

cf. when Jesus spends some time in consultation with the great and the good on the occasion of his transfiguration...

Moses is present as the law giver...

Elijah is present as the supreme prophet...

This is the man whom heaven holds up to us. If you want a ministry which is pleasing in heaven, if you want a model around which to build your own ministry, here's the man... Elijah...

But good as he was he was not immortal. So whilst Elijah was concerned about many things at Mt Horeb, God had got a different agenda. It included the recognition that Elijah could not go on for ever. God's agenda included finding a successor for him, even before he needed one.

Elijah didn't intercede and pray long hours about this. He didn't see the need..... yet...but God did..

See v.16... Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah...

10 miles south of Beth Shean on the west side of the Jordan...

Why should we be interested in this matter...? Because most of us are successors to someone else's ministry, unless we pioneered the place where we are serving now.

Because the day will come when we will have to pass on the ministry we are currently doing to someone else... unless it fails and closes.

Because if we are going to send missionaries to work cross culturally then we need to bear in mind that they will need support and possibly a successor or at least an attendant to help them in that work. Just sending a person and then abandoning them will not do.

cf. Nepal...

The mission department provides 3 years of support before they expect the new congregation to stand on its own feet. Until then it provides financial support and encouragement and prayer.

If we are planning to send people out from our congregations then it is essential that we continue to exercise ownership. We cannot launch someone into a mission situation and then abandon them as if all that has been required of us has been fulfilled.

Maybe to require accountability from the person who has gone...

cf. regular reports regarding conversions, baptisms, income, buildings etc...

Our congregation planted it, so our congregation must be committed to sustain it for as long as is necessary.

If it is a truly Spirit inspired initiative then the day will come when it is independent of the parent church and may even be planting churches itself. That most certainly should be our aim...

### **1. Why does the Lord want to appoint Elijah's successor...**

For multiple reasons...

Historically it has always been a matter of interest for the Lord...  
It has ancient credentials...cf. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...  
Our God is not a God just for a particular person, or a particular generation or a particular era...  
Our God is the eternal God..  
His name is I am...

cf. Moses/Joshua...

Joshua was appointed before he was needed. He was Moses deputy for years. From a young man he was being nurtured as the next leader and as successor to Moses. So when Moses finally dies there is no change of direction, no change of vision, no change of emphasis, no change of outlook.. everything that Moses was doing before continues to be done by Joshua.  
The people are entirely secure in the transition of one to the other...  
[we'll come back to this issue again]

cf. David/Solomon.

David truly established the kingdom. He was not the first king, as we know that honour had gone to Saul. But it was David who truly united the nation, who took Jerusalem and made it the capital of the nation. So he was the founder of the nation.

But then Solomon became the developer of the nation. He extended the borders of the kingdom further than they had ever been, before or since. During the reign of Solomon he increased the size of his standing army and became an enormous influence in the middle east. Just for that time...

cf. Jesus and his disciples.

His model was to gather a group of disciples and train them so that when he was no longer there they would be able to continue his ministry in the world.

cf. fable of Jesus ascending in to heaven and the angels asking him what plans he had for the extension of his kingdom around the world. He replied to them, 'I have appointed 12 apostles and commissioned them.' 'But what if they fail?' asked the angels, 'What other plan do you have?'... to which Jesus is alleged to have replied, 'I have no other plan.'

cf. walking in Muir forest amongst the sequoia trees... great redwoods...

Grow to 95 metres... 300+ feet..

Oldest believed to be around 3500 years old...

Saw stump of one in the ground...

Around the base of the stump there were saplings growing, so though the main tree had died and fallen yet there was life coming out of the roots...

As it happened there were 12 saplings...

cf. Paul and Timothy...

Paul was the church planter. Wherever he went people seemed to come to Christ. It was an extraordinary ministry. He just shook the tree and the fruit fell into his lap. But he rarely stayed anywhere very long.

18 months in Corinth [Acts 18.11]

2 years in Ephesus [Acts 19.10]

That wasn't long...

Then he sent Timothy off to stabilise the church that he had founded. It was his job to appoint leaders. Paul gives him a description of the kind of people that are to be appointed as pastors, leaders and deacons in each of the churches. That was one of the reasons for his letters...

cf. Bertie/me..

Bertie was in the church in Aberystwyth (UK) for 8 years. During that time he took a congregation of 70 people and transformed it, so that when he left there were over 200 worshipping there. He loved to start new things. He was an inspiring man, full of enthusiasm, single minded. He always wanted to get on. But at the same time he got bored with things. He found it difficult to sustain some things, particularly if they weren't flourishing all the time. I took over and stayed for 25 years as the builder to his pioneer. The church continued to grow. We were sending people in all directions for missionary work and for church leadership. We have lost count of the number of people who have gone in to church leadership...it is somewhere around 50 but we don't know them all.

- Not much grows under great oak trees. They take all the nourishment from the ground and shade anything else that is trying to grow underneath it.

= lesser souls like it this way because then they can shine.

= if the leader can do it all then he doesn't need anyone else... all the other potential helpers are redundant.

= others feel that they could never be that good themselves.

It will be bad for the future of the Lord's work if he does not put in place a successor to Elijah, and prepare for the day when he is taken up to heaven.

- The Lord doesn't want his work to stop...

The work of a prophet is not confined just to one single generation and one single location. Prophetic ministry, speaking the Lord's word to the rich/powerful, to the community, to the world at large is a continuing ministry in every generation. The Lord doesn't want that ministry to die out when Elijah dies.

Leaders and pastors are God's gift to the church.

Prophets are God's gift to the world.

Missionaries are God's gift to the unevangelised.

The Lord wants to ensure that he has someone at the heart of the nation whom he can call on and use.

The Lord doesn't want Elijah to be alone any longer...

Elijah's finding it hard...

There are some hard times lying ahead..

It will be hard for Elijah to handle those days without some kind of human encouragement and support...

cf. Naboth's vineyard...

Overthrow of Ahab and Jezebel...

cf. Gen 2.18: It's not good for the man to be alone...

No wife, then at the very least a supportive assistant...

The Lord knows that different people bring different gifts. No two people and no two ministries are the same. What the majority of us will have found or are finding is that the Lord has placed us into a sphere of ministry which is perfectly suited to the talents that we possess. It is quite remarkable

how he does that. He doesn't waste anything from our background, our abilities, our strengths and even our weaknesses, but he weaves them all into the work that he has given us.

Some people are pioneers. They love having a big challenge and like breaking new ground but they get bored quite quickly and want to pass the new work on to someone else.

Some people are builders. They don't have the energy or initiative to start a new work, but they can build on the work that has already begun.

cf. Paul and Timothy

Paul was the builder.

Timothy and also Titus were the builders amongst many others.

Moses was the leader for the wilderness.

Joshua was the leader for the promised land.

Elijah was an excellent prophet for his generation but he had to deal with some awful things.

cf. dealing with the prophets of Baal...

Elisha was God's back up plan for the next stage of ministry. If there's a problem with Hazael and Jehu then it would fall to Elisha to sort out the problems that they had left unresolved - see v.16/17.

Fresh eyes see fresh possibilities and opportunities.

After we've been living in a place for a while we get settled.

Sometimes it needs someone new to ask, why are you doing that...? Why are you doing that in that way? Have you tried this...? wouldn't this work better...?

We get into ruts. Once we've started to do things in certain ways there is a danger that we'll not look at any other way of doing that same thing. We get comfortable and sometimes we get lazy. Someone new can have a really beneficial effect.

Succession is one of the most dangerous moments in the life of any church.

Not the most dangerous, but one of the most dangerous...

And the Lord knows it which is why he is ready to take control of the process.

cf. the worst kind of succession is when one person stops and then the church starts to look round for someone else to take their place. Everything falls apart in the meantime.

We don't know precisely how much longer Elijah lived after this. It was at least 3 more years before Ahab died. He was succeeded by his son Ahaziah who was no better than his father, but he only lived for a further 12 months or so.

So during that time Elisha was being prepared for succession, probably over a period of some 5 years.

This was precisely what Jesus was doing with his disciples. From the very outset he had got an end in view - to make them fishers of men. He was going to have them in his company for 3 years and then the succession would happen.

As a result there would be:

= no loss of momentum... they would continue to do what they had already learned to do.

= no loss of time whilst one person finishes and the next one begins.  
= no lingering competition between one leader and the next who feels intimidated by the person who was in post before and has to try to make their mark or become more popular than the person who has moved on.

Sometimes when pastors feel insecure they can rubbish the ministry of the person who was in post before them. But we are not to do that.

cf. Eph 2.20: we are to build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We are to honour the work, sacrifice and effort of the ones who have gone before. Sometimes their ministry has been hugely sacrificial. They have spilled their own blood in the service of the Lord.

= no loss of vision...

cf. dogs leg visions...

cf. Harborne where moved everything into the church, and then under new administration moved everything out of the church. Imagine the cost in money, resources, time and the effort involved.

cf. Millmead where divided the church up into separate congregations expecting them to thrive, and on this occasion it failed miserably and the next man had to undo it all.

## **2. What does the Lord do in appointing Elijah's successor?**

He gives Elisha to Elijah as an attendant...v.21.

Elijah is not given the finished article, a highly qualified prophet, he is given a man who has enormous potential but that potential has to be developed and educated.

Being an attendant is a test of his humility. He is going to learn the job from the ground up. He's going to spend time carrying his bags, fetching his cloak, making the coffee.

**Leaders of quality are found amongst the followers of quality.**

**PRU: WHO IS THE CHRISTIAN LEADER YOU HAVE MOST ADMIRERD AND WHY?**

**CONGREGATION: WHO IS THE CHRISTIAN LEADER YOU HAVE MOST ADMIRERD AND WHY?**

That's where we should be looking for them all the time.

He was a wonderful gift to Elijah.

Elijah was a wonderful gift to Elisha. He could watch him at work, see his devotional rhythm, listen to his preaching, learn from his discernment, see what worked, see what didn't and learn from his mistakes. He could have a growing appetite for ministry fostered within him, watch him dealing with people, be inspired by his courage and wisdom, watch where he turned for the resources that he needed daily.

**DO YOU HAVE AN ATTENDANT OR TWO OR THREE LEARNING FROM YOU?**

If you are then you are multiplying your effectiveness...

= by passing on your expertise.

Those who follow you can stand on your shoulders and they will be able to see further. cf. 1 Thess 1.6: You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord... in spite of severe suffering.

= by multiplying your work.

Some of us love to be busy and we love to be at full stretch. We feel good about ourselves, we feel pleasure when we tell others how hard we are working and what we are doing and how many sermons we've preached, and how many people we've won for the Lord.

But it is better to put 10 men to work than to do the work of 10 men. If I try to do the work of 10 men then I will exhaust myself and in the meantime I have robbed 9 other men of the opportunity to be involved. They could have exercised their ministry but I wouldn't let them. They could have used their gifts but instead they were made redundant by me.

It is far far better for us not to be gifted in every area of ministry otherwise we'll end up wanting to do it all ourselves.

cf. one man band...

cf. people who are extremely gifted. Their house is always half finished because they'll never call anyone else in to help. I can do the electrics myself, I can do the plastering myself, I can fix the water supply myself. And because they can do it themselves they say that they'll do it when they have the time. For others of us we get people in to help and do that very quickly because if someone else doesn't do it, it's not going to get done by me not because I don't want to do it but because I simply can't, I don't have the gifting.

## **Conclusion**

We must invest in young leaders...

We must look for them..

If it was so important to the Lord that he provided Elijah's successor without him being asked, then it is a subject which must be of importance to us too.

There are youngsters just waiting to be asked/invited...

Look at the immediate response of Elisha to Elijah's invitation...

cf. 1 Kings 19.20-21..

- he said goodbye to his parents...they were not going to be allowed to hinder him...
- he slaughtered the oxen and gave the meat to the poor...

cf. sell what you have and give to the poor..

- he burned the ploughing equipment... there was no going back..
- he set out to follow... so often as preachers we don't ask enough which is why many do not rise to the challenge...

Had Elijah known precisely what was to become of Elisha he would have been thrilled...

cf. as he saw him being taken into heaven he received a double portion of Elijah's spirit... see 2 Kings 2.9-10..

cf. I stood at the grave side of bishop Festo Kivengere in Kabale Uganda a few years ago, and prayed for a double portion of his spirit to rest on me. This was the kind of man he was...

Kivengere had met with Idi Amin to voice his opposition to the killing in 1973 of three men from his diocese by a government firing squad on a trumped-up charge:

February 10 began as a sad day for us in Kabale. People were commanded to come to the stadium and witness the execution. Death permeated the atmosphere. A silent crowd of about three thousand was there ready to watch. I had permission from the authorities to speak to the men before they died, and two of my fellow ministers were with me. They brought the men in a truck and unloaded them. They were handcuffed and their feet were chained. The firing squad stood at attention. As we walked into the center of the stadium, I was wondering what to say. How do you give the Gospel to doomed men who are probably seething with rage?

We approached them from behind, and as they turned to look at us, what a sight! Their faces were all alight with an unmistakable glow and radiance. Before we could say anything, one of them burst out: "Bishop, thank you for coming! I wanted to tell you. The day I was arrested, in my prison cell, I asked the Lord Jesus to come into my heart. He came in and forgave me all my sins! Heaven is now open, and there is nothing between me and my God! Please tell my wife and children that I am going to be with Jesus. Ask them to accept him into their lives as I did." The other two men told similar stories, excitedly raising their hands, which rattled their handcuffs.

I felt that what I needed to do was to talk to the soldiers, not to the condemned. So I translated what the men had said into a language the soldiers understood. The military men were standing there with guns cocked and bewilderment on their faces. They were so dumbfounded that they forgot to put the hoods over the men's faces! The three faced the firing squad standing close together. They looked toward the people and began to wave, handcuffs and all. The people waved back. Then shots were fired, and the three were with Jesus.

Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit and he received it. Elijah performed 7 miracles during his life...

cf. 2366/2367

There is no competition between the two men, for the lives of both of them honour the Lord.