



## Elisha

*“Taking up the mantle:  
A transition of power”*

### WEEK ONE – SETTING THE SCENE

#### *Reading: 1 Kings 18*

For us to understand the life of Elisha, we first need to look at his predecessor and mentor, Elijah. The latter is far better known because of the dramatic events that took place on Mount Carmel.

In 930 BC, following the death of Solomon, the Kingdom was divided in two, the north keeping the name Israel, with the cities of Shechem and Samaria, and the south Judah, where Jerusalem was located. There had always been disunity between the tribes, but now God said he was splitting the kingdom: “Because they have forsaken me . . . and have not walked in my ways”. Elijah was called, about 150 years after King David, to confront the Israelites who had become steeped in idol worship.

The king at this time, Ahab was one of the most wicked kings Israel had seen. Encouraged by his wife Jezebel, they had massacred the prophets of the Lord and worshipped other gods. Obadiah, one of the prophets had however, taken one hundred prophets and hidden them. At the beginning of chapter 17 we read that God told Elijah to tell Ahab: *“As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”*. However, we read in verse 1 of chapter 18 that God told Elijah to present himself to Ahab to say that God would send rain on the earth. Ahab described Elijah as “the troubler of Israel”, but the response was that Ahab and his fathers before him had forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals.

- What does Numbers 23:19 say about God?
- Does this say anything to us today?

Elijah told Ahab to send and gather all Israel on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who ate with Jezebel.

- Look at verse 21 of chapter 18. It is a question we should perhaps ask of ourselves. We cannot be half-hearted in our service for God, either we’re in or we’re out.

- Read verses 23-29. What was Elijah trying to do the prophets of Baal?
- Read verses 30-37. What does this tell us about Elijah's faith in God? Do we have that same faith and confidence?
- How did God respond?

Verse 41 is a wonderful verse: *"Then Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.'"*

At that moment in time there was nothing to indicate that rain was coming. Seven times Elijah sent his servant up the mount to look out to the sea. Six times he reported nothing, but on the seventh he saw *"a cloud as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea"*, so Elijah told him to tell Ahab to get moving before the rain stopped him. As the clouds darkened the sky and the wind and heavy rain started, we read that the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah; he tucked up the skirts of his robe into his belt and ran in front of Ahab's chariot until they reached Jezreel!

- It is important to note that when God says something will happen, we need to listen and do as he asks.

### **Reading: 1 Kings 19:1-18**

Notice that Elijah thought he was the only prophet left but God had news for him. He stood on the side of the mountain and God brought strong winds, and then an earthquake, but God was not in those. Likewise, he sent fire, but God was not there. Lastly, we are told that there was a still small voice and at that sound Elijah stood at the entrance of the cave and God asked him an important question: *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

- We need to ask ourselves that question. What are we doing at Hull Minster, and in our lives? Are we drifting along in our Christian walk, or are we sure of what God wants from us and focused on that?
- Do you feel alone? Well, God told Elijah who thought he was the only one left, that he had 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed down to Baal.
- Even in the darkest times in our lives, God is with us. Just hold on!

Now he'd stopped feeling sorry for himself, God told him to go and anoint the man who was to follow him. Elisha was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen (he was not from a poor family), when Elijah walked by and threw his mantle, his cloak, over Elisha. We don't read of Elisha hesitating for one moment. (Read verse 20).

- Do we always respond promptly to God's calling?

- Verse 21 tells us that he took two oxen and killed them, using the wood from the plough to cook the meat. He gave everyone something to eat and then got up and followed Elijah and became his servant.

This was no poor farm boy who saw a chance to escape. The family must have been relatively wealthy at least, to be able to have twelve oxen to use in ploughing. I wonder how God had been preparing Elisha's heart for this new phase in his life.

- Notice that Elisha well and truly 'burned his boats', indicating his total commitment to God's call.
- How committed are we to God's call on our lives? Is it 24/7 or now and again when we feel like it?

### Prayer

**Father may we always walk in your ways. Help us to make you the priority in our lives and not look back. Strengthen us for what you have prepared for us to do.**

### The call of Elisha

