

## A Yoke for a Cloak

1Ki 19:19 So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him.

1Ki 19:20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?"

1Ki 19:21 And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

- 12 yoke or pairs of oxen indicates wealth, yet Elisha himself is with the last pair suggesting a "hands on" approach and not only playing a "supervisory role".
- Elijah does not state his case, implore the young man into service, or provide the pros and cons of the prophetic calling. He only casts his cloak (mantle) on him. Notice the "call" on Elishah's life does not come from Elijah. Also notice the mantle is placed on Elisha to represent the calling, however, it remains Elijah's mantle (until Elijah is taken away into Heaven in 2 Kings 2:8-14 when Elisha picks up the mantle).
- In contrast to the "would-be disciple" of Christ who asked to return home and bury his parents (Luke 9:61-62), Elisha is granted his request because of his heart's intent to bid farewell and separate himself from his previous life.
- Elijah's ministry was characterized by "judgment" while the ministry and miracles of Elisha would be one of "grace".
- Elisha's actions are immediate and final. The narrative does not focus on the "tearful goodbyes" but rather, the severing of Elisha from his former life as a farmer. There is no plan B or backup, he sacrifices the oxen and even burns the yokes – for him, there is no turning back to former things.
- Physically speaking, Elisha had much to "lose" in ministry. Some measure of wealth, lands, family, and friends.
- Elisha's actions also indicate a heart ready for ministry. He was hardworking and hands on, he was not afraid of getting dirty, he was decisive yet considerate, and he shared what he had with those around him.
- "Burn the ships" pertains to the actions of conquerors who, upon landing on foreign soil, would order the ships on which that arrived to be burnt to signify to their forces that retreat was impossible. In this case, Elisha burned the "yokes" as he had no intentions of returning to his former life. Elishah did not approach ministry as a "new season" in life but more of a "life sentence".
- Elisha does not immediately become the next prophet for the nation – he becomes a servant first.

2Ki 2:11 And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

2Ki 2:12 And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

2Ki 2:13 And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

2Ki 2:14 Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

2Ki 2:15 Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

- Once Elijah is taken up into Heaven, the mantle is fully passed on to Elisha. At this point, the mantle falls to the ground and the younger must choose to pick it up.
- Also note the "onlookers" did not fully comprehend what had happened to Elijah but clearly understood the spirit of Elijah now rested on Elisha.
- Again, Elijah did not endow Elisha with the mantle or his calling. Even in this final act, all was left in God's hands. If Elisha saw his ascension, he would receive his mantle. Although the two had enjoyed companionship and service together, ultimately the calling came only from God.

1Pe 4:10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

1Pe 4:11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.