

that the inheritance went to his brother. But the daughters of this man, Zelophehad, asked Moses if it were possible for the inheritance to pass to them. On the basis of this incident the Divine decree is made, "If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter" (v. 8).

One can imagine that from this time the inheritance was occasionally passed on to future generations in this way. It is reasonable to suppose, although we are without Scriptural proof, that Mary's father died in the same position, so that she and her Son in turn became the rightful heirs in this way. Scripture is silent as to Mary's family, apart from the fact that we know she had a sister (Jno. 19:25).

Luke indeed proves that here is the one whose right it is.

#### Note

*Our Australian Editor, Brother Geoff Henstock, comments that, though this article puts the most commonly held view amongst us, given, for example, by Brother Robert Roberts in Nazareth Revisited (pp. 44-5), there are three other views. Brother Frank Jannaway suggests in Christadelphian Answers that it is the other way round; Luke presents Joseph's genealogy and Matthew Mary's (p. 20). Brother Harry Whittaker, in Studies in the Gospels, presents a third view, that Joseph and Mary were cousins, and that the Luke genealogy is of both Joseph and Mary, with Matthew's being that of Joseph (p. 5). Yet another view, presented by F. W. Farrar in Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: St Luke, is that both genealogies are Joseph's (p. 372); but this seems to have nothing to commend it, and has not, to my knowledge, been advocated in the Brotherhood.—T.B.*

# Echoes of Elijah and Elisha in the Gospel of Luke

Trevor Maher

*As we read through the Gospel of Luke, events in the life of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus, and aspects of their preaching, bring to mind parallels from the ministries of the two great Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha. These patterns reflect the constant work of God in striving to bring sinful men and women to salvation.*

**T**HE WORK OF the two Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha came at a watershed in the history of God's people, particularly in relation to the ten-tribe kingdom. The prophets' work covered a period of approximately seventy years. It was a major appeal to the people to turn to God before the Assyrians came. If Elisha died at around 795 B.C. then there were fewer than seventy-five years until the ten tribes went into captivity.

There is a very telling expression in 2 Kings 10:32: "In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short". These words mark the beginning of the final period of Israel's existence. Jehu had executed judgement on the house of Ahab, removing Baal worship in the process. The army of Hazael king of Syria began to raid Israel, bringing areas and towns under his control. Then in 721 B.C. the

Assyrians finally removed the ten-tribe kingdom.

When we come to the New Testament we see the ministries of John the Baptist and Christ following a similar pattern in regard to character and events. Within forty years of the deaths of John and Jesus, the Roman

destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the dispersion of the Jewish people took place; the words of Jesus in the Olivet Prophecy, recorded in Luke 21, were fulfilled.

#### In the Luke record

Altogether there are twenty-six references in the synoptic Gospels to Elijah, nine in Luke, and also one in Luke to Elisha. All three synoptic Gospels record the transfiguration, when Elijah appeared, and also the statement by the disciples that people were saying that Jesus was Elijah, so there is duplication in these references.

The message of the angel concerning John to Zacharias as he served in the temple was that he would come "in the spirit and power of Elias" (Lk. 1:17). Here was confirmation that the prophecies of Isaiah 40:3-5 and Malachi 3:1; 4:5,6 would find

a fulfilment in the work of John, and that there would be similarities between Elijah and John and in the reaction of the nation to them.

At the start of Christ's Galilean ministry, when he taught in the synagogue in Nazareth, the words that enraged his audience take us back to 1 and 2 Kings: "many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias . . . but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta . . . unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (Lk. 4:25-27). In this way Jesus is drawing a parallel between the attitudes and behaviour of the people in the time of Elijah and Elisha and those of people in his day.

By introducing us to the work of John and Christ in this way, Luke's Gospel is saying that understanding the times of Elijah and Elisha will give us greater insight into the work of Christ; and the reverse is also true. The pattern of Elijah followed by Elisha, and John the Baptist followed by Christ, is an obvious one, but it is also correct to see the work of both Elijah and Elisha individually prefiguring the work of Christ.

The Elijah/Elisha period contains a unique emphasis, so far as the Old Testament is concerned, on miracles of healing performed by the servants of God. The narrative of their missions contains nearly all the accounts of such miracles recounted in the Old Testament. Only Christ is recorded as performing more miracles than Elisha. There is both a spiritual healing of the nation, urged on by Elijah in his conflict with Baal, and physical healing in raising dead children, feeding a large number of people from only a small amount of food, curing leprosy, etc. The first is reflected in the ministry of John in preparing people for Christ, "turn[ing] the hearts of the fathers to the children", and the second in the many miracles of Christ carried out for those who came to listen to his teaching, and for those whose faith would make them whole.

### The spirit and power of Elijah

The appearance on the scene of John the Baptist echoes that of Elijah: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel" (Lk. 1:80; cf. 3:2,3; 1 Kgs. 17:1). Both these prophets suddenly appeared on the scene, challenging the authority of the rulers, highlighting the corrupt religious practices and putting the spotlight on individual behaviour and responsibility. Both men, though,

## Miracles exclusive to Luke

Of the twenty miracles recorded in the Gospel of Luke, six of them are exclusive to the Luke record.

1	Draught of fishes.....	5:4-11
2	Raising the widow's son at Nain.....	7:11-18
3	Woman with the spirit of infirmity ....	13:11-17
4	Healing the man with dropsy.....	14:1-6
5	Cleansing of ten lepers.....	17:11-19
6	Healing of Malchus.....	22:50,51

were preparing the way for momentous events that were yet to come and for the one who was to follow them. The message of the angel to Zacharias was that the one to be born of Elizabeth should "go before him [Christ] in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk. 1:17). As the narrative unfolds in Luke, we see that multitudes came to hear John in the desert region, and many were baptized (3:7,12).

However, there is also a more specific way in which that phrase, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord", can be understood. Among those who came to be baptized of John were those who were later to be the disciples of Christ (Jno. 1:35-42). John baptized them with water, but one was to come who would baptize them with the Spirit. When Peter addressed the disciples on the matter of replacing Judas, he stated that such a person must be one who was present throughout the ministry of Jesus, "beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us" (Acts 1:22), a clear indication of the two ministries being linked in the same way as Elijah and Elisha's.

The challenge of John to the religious leaders was direct. In Luke 3:7 it appears as though the condemnation is spoken to the whole multitude, but Matthew 3:7 shows that in fact it is the Pharisees and Sadducees that John addressed as a "generation of vipers". Centuries before, Elijah had thrown down a similar challenge to the prophets of Baal, and had said to the people, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" (1 Kgs. 18:21). Elijah had confronted a weak king, Ahab, and a wicked queen, Jezebel, and it was the queen who caused him to flee to the desert, where he sought of God that he might die. John

also reproved a weak king, Herod, and his wicked queen, Herodias, and as a consequence he was imprisoned and ultimately put to death.

### **The power of the prophetic word**

The emphasis during the Elijah/Elisha period is, of course, on the power of the Word of God. In particular the prophetic word is emphasised. The preaching of Christ, along with his performing of miracles, caused the people to say, "That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people" (Lk. 7:16). In the manifestation of God's power at Horeb to Elijah it was not in wind, fire, or earthquake that Yahweh was to be found, but in the still small voice. That voice set forth the events that were to follow: the anointing of Hazael, then of Jehu, and finally of Elisha, who would build up and strengthen those represented by the "seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal" (1 Kgs. 19:18).

It was the Word of God that was proclaimed by Elijah that brought the drought for three years and then the rain (17:1; 18:1). It was the Word of God through Elijah that proclaimed judgement on Ahab for allowing Ben-hadad to live, and on Ahab and Jezebel after the atrocity of making false accusations and murdering Naboth so Ahab could have his vineyard (20:35-43; 21:17-29). It was the Word of God through Elisha that determined that Joash should smite the Syrians three times (2 Kgs. 13:14-19). Elijah brought the Word of God to the king, the queen, the false prophets of Baal and the people (1 Kgs. 18:17-20). He brought it also to the widow in Zarephath, a Gentile. Elisha, for most of his ministry, took the Word to the people and to those who were in the 'schools of the prophets', whilst also proclaiming it at certain times to rulers (2 Kgs. 2:3-7; 3:2-19; 4:1,38; 6:1). In dealing with the leprosy of Naaman he also preached to a Gentile (ch. 5).

When we come to the times of John the Baptist we see that Luke says he came "preaching", that he was "The voice of one crying in the wilderness", and that the purpose of this work was that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (3:3-6). In particular we note that chapter 3 opens with a list of the rulers, starting with Caesar and coming down to Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests, none of whom had the power of God's Word invested in them (see [box](#)). From the most powerful man in the world to the most important in the nation of the Jews, the high priest, Luke draws our attention to these men.

## **Luke 3:1,2**

Tiberius Caesar, Roman emperor

Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea

Herod, tetrarch of Galilee

Philip, tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis

Lysanius, tetrarch of Abilene

Annas and Caiaphas, high priests

### **But**

"The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness", as it did to Elijah in the wilderness of Gilead.

He is making a comparison with John, a man roughly clad, living in the wilderness on locusts and wild honey, yet given the Word of God. Elijah would have stood out compared with the opulence of Ahab and Jezebel and the dress of the false prophets of Baal, and John too would have stood out amongst those whose garments were edged with broad fringes, who sought the best seats at the feast, and robbed widows of their wealth. Nicodemus was to come to Christ, puzzled by the fact that as "the teacher" (Jno. 3:10, RV) in Israel he could not understand why the voice of God was not being expressed through him rather than this one from Nazareth, the carpenter's son. In Luke 21 we see that the fulfilment of God's Word, expressed in the prophetic utterances of Christ concerning the judgements on Israel, would be brought about in A.D. 70 by the Romans.

### **The spirit of Christ**

The names of Elijah and Elisha carry the meanings 'My God is Yah' and 'God is Saviour' respectively. In a sense, then, they both represent the work of Christ in their ministries. When the Apostle Peter refers to the spirit of Christ being in the prophets, this is related to "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. 1:10-12). We have in the sickness and death of Elisha a foreshadowing of this.

In 2 Kings 13 we see some remarkable parallels with the work of Christ. First it must be noted that there are three resurrections in the time of Elijah and Elisha, and sickness is present in all three (1 Kgs. 17:17; 2 Kgs. 4:18-20; 13:14,21). The two instances involving sons of widows see the living prophets embrace, that is, identify themselves with, the one who is dead. In 2 Kings 13 we see a dead man as it were embracing a dead man.

Let us consider the details given in 2 Kings 13. It is the time of the Passover, "the coming in of the year" (v. 20). Some people were burying a dead man in Elisha's grave, having opened the tomb to do this. Why? Presumably because the dead man had requested it. He was therefore associated with Elisha and the faith of Elisha. The appearance of the enemy caused the burial party hastily to deposit the body into the grave; but as soon as the body rested on the bones of the dead prophet it revived, a resurrection took place. Here was a witness to the truth of Elisha's preaching and faith, to the hope which he had.

An important expression in this account is, "Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died" (v. 14). The Hebrew imparts a certain emphasis: "And Elisha had become sick with the sickness by which he is going to die". It is a prophetic statement. The word "sickness" is the same as the word translated "grief" in Isaiah 53:10: "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; He hath put him to grief" (cf. vv. 3,4). The suggestion is, therefore, that in Elisha's sickness God was placing on him in a figure the sins of his generation and pointing forward to the work of Christ and to the hope of resurrection from the dead in Christ.

When we come to Romans 6 we see that this figure applies to us in baptism. We are buried into the tomb of a dead man, associating ourselves with his faith and sinless life in the hope of resurrection. In Luke we see that the thief on the cross, who desired to be associated with the Son of God, expressed faith in the coming Kingdom and was "planted . . . in the likeness of his death" (Rom. 6:5). We see Joseph of Arimathea, who was waiting for the Kingdom of God, placing Christ in his tomb, associating himself with the death of Christ (Lk. 23:50-53). In the suffering of Elisha we see the foreshadowing of Christ's suffering, and in his death there is also the hope of resurrection.

A link back to Elijah can be seen in the incident recorded in Luke 7:11-15, when Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain. Here are echoes of Elijah's miracle at Zarephath (1 Kgs. 17:17-24). In both cases there is a widow and an only son. Compassion is involved and the result brings glory to God. In Luke 7:15 it says, "And he delivered him to his mother", and this expression is also found in 1 Kings 17:23.

### **"Beware of covetousness"**

There are also strong echoes from the times of Elijah and Elisha in Luke 12. Regarding Elijah,

there are the following links with 1 Kings 17 and 18:

- "Consider the ravens" (v. 24; 17:4-6)
- In "neither be ye of doubtful mind" (v. 29) the Greek for "doubtful" carries the same idea as the word "halt" in "How long halt ye between two opinions?" (18:21)
- "Let your loins be girded about" (v. 35; 18:46)
- "I am come to send fire on the earth" (v. 49; 18:38)
- "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is" (v. 54; 18:41-45).

These allusions occur in a chapter where Jesus warns us of the dangers of materialism: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (v. 15). They direct our minds back to Israel in the days when the striking figure of Elijah came striding out of the desert of Gilead to confront the materialistic and covetous reign of Ahab.

Materialism diverts us from the Kingdom to come, it blurs our vision of the Kingdom. We do well to remember those words of Elisha to Gehazi: "Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?" (2 Kgs. 5:26). Truly the whole scenario of the times of Elijah and Elisha are being highlighted in the times of John and Jesus, and in our days also.

### **"He was parted from them"**

Elijah was the only prophet to appoint his successor, and John the Baptist did the same when Christ came to him at the River Jordan (Lk. 3:16,17). The Lord Jesus also did the same; Luke ends with the ascension of Christ and his instruction to the disciples to await the time when they should receive the Holy Spirit power.

The account in 2 Kings 2 of the ascension of Elijah is the pivotal event between the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. With Elijah gone, his disciple Elisha now takes his place, having been blessed with a double portion of the Spirit, representing his position as spiritually the first-born son of Elijah. After Christ ascended to heaven, his disciples received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The apostles were appointed by Christ, and they were to be witnesses of his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, and the fact that repentance and remission of sins were possible through Christ.

That responsibility has passed down through the generations to our day and age. The echoes from the times of Elijah and Elisha in the lives of John and Jesus sound loudly in our ears, for we live in similar times. At the transfiguration of Jesus, Elisha was not present, as he foreshadowed the life of Christ and Christ was present himself in, as it were, the glory of immortality. Elijah was there, representing the prophets but also speaking as one who had directed the nation to the Law, the Word of God. Moses was alongside him, the one through whom the Law was delivered, and a prophet also, who prefigured the greater Prophet to come. Thus they were both representatives of the Law and the prophets.

Another idea that has been suggested is that Moses represents those that have died and been buried, whilst Elijah represents those who will not taste death before the Lord comes, for he was taken away in the whirlwind with the angelic host. The time may not be too far distant from us when the angelic host gather not just the lonely figure of one servant of God, but all those sons and daughters who strive every day to acknowledge the Lord of hosts, before whom we stand.

*For more on the parallels with Elijah/Elisha see the **Martha and Mary** section of [“The women of Luke’s Gospel”](#) (p. 266).*

# The journey to Jerusalem

David Burges

*A large part of Luke’s Gospel, running from chapters 9 to 19, presents Jesus as making a journey up to Jerusalem. This article gives an outline of the incidents occurring and the teaching given on the way, and brings out lessons for ourselves as we journey to the Kingdom.*

**T**HE CONCEPT of the disciple’s spiritual life as a journey towards the desired haven of the Kingdom of God is a familiar one. The Bible features a number of journeys that are endowed with symbolic significance beyond their simple narrative. The pilgrimage of Abraham from Mesopotamia to Canaan, re-enacted by both Ezra and Nehemiah, and the wilderness journey of the children of Israel, are prime examples, each of them ending in the Land of Promise.

Less familiar in this context is the final progress of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Land, up to Jerusalem, there to offer himself as the sacrifice for our sins. It is Luke’s record that clearly presents the final six months of the Master’s ministry in the form of the journey to Jerusalem. It should not be seen as a single, uninterrupted passage to the destination, for we have to fit other events into this period, such as John’s account of the visit to Bethany and the raising of Lazarus (11:7,17,54). Rather, Luke, under inspiration, is assembling his material to present the final stages of the Lord’s ministry in the form of a pilgrimage to the city of God.

## “He steadfastly set his face”

Luke announces the journey with the memorable words, “And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (9:51).

Knowing the shame and rejection that awaited him, the Lord could not be deflected from the path set before him by his heavenly Father, placing all his confidence in Him.

There is here an allusion to the third ‘Servant Song’ of Isaiah’s prophecy, in which the Messiah/Servant determines to pursue his destiny, even knowing the suffering that awaits him: “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: *therefore have I set my face like a flint*, and I know that I shall not be ashamed” (50:6,7). This determination, this ‘setting of Jesus’ face’, must have been apparent to all who encountered him, for in the very first incident, recorded in the following verses in Luke, he is rejected by a group of Samaritans, precisely because “his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem” (9:53).

Significantly, Luke places this “time” to be “received up” immediately after his account of the transfiguration (vv. 28-36), in which Jesus was seen in glory, anticipating his ascension to heaven, and speaking with Moses and Elijah “of