

Yahweh v Baal

(1 Kings 16-19)

Round 1: the rain competition (1 Kings 16:29 - 17:24)

Ahab worships a storm god...

“... he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Eth-Baal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria.” (16:31-32)

... So God announces a drought

Round 2: the barbecue competition (1 Kings 18)

Only Yahweh can light the fire

Baal 0 - 1 Yahweh
(v25-29) (v30-38)

Only Yahweh can send the rain

Baal 0 - 2 Yahweh
(v2, 5-6) (vv41-4)

A puzzle

Why does Yahweh wait until he has won the Barbeque Competition before he scores the winning goal in the Rain Competition?

God v the people's doubts!

BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
The true prophets are cut off; Obadiah faithful but afraid (v3-16) The people “limped” (v21 cf. v26b) The people “did not answer” (v21 cf. v26, 29)	The number 12 (v31, v33-35) The ‘horizontal’ prayer (v36-37)	The people know the score: “Yahweh, he is God; Yahweh, he is God” (v39) The false prophets are cut off (v40)

Application

Don't waver. Yahweh is God!

“Elijah was a man just like us” (James 5:17-18)

At first sight he doesn't seem very like us at all!

But take a text out of context and you're left with a con! James 5:16-20!



A story of a burned out prophet? (1 Kings 19)

Elijah's a bit down and needs God to softly whisper to him?

*Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm.*

Evaluating Elijah's evaluation

"I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts.
For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant,
thrown down your altars,
and killed your prophets with the sword,
and I, even I only, am left,
and they seek my life, to take it away." (v10, v14)

There won't be a second chance

- 1) Clear allusions to Exodus

1 Kings 19	Feature in Exodus	Significance in Exodus
God sends Elijah to Mount Horeb (v8) where there is wind, earthquake and fire (vv11-12)	The people of Israel go to Mount Sinai (another name for Mount Horeb, see 3:12) where there is an earthquake and fire (19:16-20)	God made his covenant with the people of Israel (19:5-6)
Elijah hides in a cave (v9) as God 'passed by' (v11)	Moses hid in a cleft of the rock as God 'passed by' (33:22)	God renewed the covenant with the people of Israel after their apostasy with the golden calf (34:10, 27)

- 2) A clear contrast to Exodus: 'the LORD was *not* in the wind...*not* in the earthquake.... *not* in the fire' (vv11-12).

The assassins are coming (1 Kings 19:15-18)

Hazael

Jehu

Elisha

But there is a remnant (cf. Romans 11:1-5)

The unstoppable word

(1 Kings 22 - 2 Kings 2)

The prophet who refused to scratch where they itched (1 Kings 22:1-50)

“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.” (2 Timothy 4:3)

“Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?” (v6)	“Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or not?” (v15)
The many prophets promise victory	Micaiah promises terrible defeat
FALSE	TRUE

Would <i>like</i> to be true	True
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Deep down perhaps we know what is true but...

- 1) we gather a crowd
- 2) we avoid those who will challenge us
 - or pressurise them to conform
 - or persecute them
- 3) we ignore the spiritual realities
- 4) we try a halfway house (cf. Ahab's disguise)

The prophet who couldn't be stopped (1 Kings 22:51 – 2 Kings 1:18)

Ahaziah does evil and serves Baal (22:52-53) and when injured, looks to Baal-zebub (2 Kings 1:2)

Elijah is told to **go up** and say:

“...You shall not **come down** from the bed to which you have **gone up**, but you shall surely die” (v3-4)

The king's messengers report that a man **came up** and said:

“...You shall not **come down** from the bed to which you have **gone up**, but you shall surely die” (v5-6)

Ahaziah realises that the camel's-hair-clothed man was Elijah (vv7-8)!

A captain **went up** and said to Elijah:

“O man of God ... **come down!**” (v9)

But Elijah answered

“Let fire **come down!**”

⇒ fire **came down** (v10)

A second captain was sent to say to Elijah:

“O man of God ... **come down!**” (v11)

But Elijah answered

“Let fire **come down!**”

⇒ fire **came down** (v12)

A third captain **went up** and pleaded with Elijah:

“Please don't let fire **come down!**” (vv13-14)

And the angel of the LORD told Elijah

“It's safe to **go down**”

⇒ *Elijah went down* (v15)

Elijah says to the king

“You shall not **come down** from the bed to which you have **gone up**, but you shall surely die” (v16)

⇒ he died according to the word of the LORD (v17)

A bald men who sent bears at Bethel (2 Kings 2:23-25)

What did you expect from an assassin? (1 Kings 19:17)?

Yet he also saves?!

The Saviour

(2 Kings 4-5)

We are expecting judgment ...

“And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death.” (1 Kings 19:17)

... but Elisha brings miraculous salvation (2 Kings 4) ...

A poor widow receives oil (vv1-7);

A rich woman receives a son, twice

- he is conceived despite her infertility (vv8-17)
- he is raised from the dead (vv18-37)

A starving multitude are fed, twice

- a deadly stew is decontaminated (vv38-41)
- a bread is multiplied (vv42-44)

... to the “remnant” who cling to him ...

The “sons of the prophets” who hung around Elijah and Elisha (v1, v38 – and, subtly, v42)

The Shunammite who backed Elisha’s ministry (vv9-10 – and, subtly, v23)

... just like Jesus

Elijah	Elisha (his name means ‘God saves’)	Jesus (his name means ‘Yahweh saves’)
Provides a miraculously-bottomless jar of flour and jug of oil (1 Kings 17:8-16)	Provides a miraculously-bottomless jar of oil (4:1-7)	Miraculously multiplies bread to feed 5000 men – in particular, he instructs his helpers to distribute a too-small amount of food, at which suggestion they are incredulous, but everyone eats, and there are leftovers (Luke 9:10-17).
	Miraculously multiplies bread to feed 100 men – in particular, he instructs his helpers to distribute a too-small amount of food, at which suggestion they are incredulous, but everyone eats, and there are leftovers (4:42-44)	
Raises a widow’s son from the dead, by prayer and bodily contact, in an upper room in the presence of an angry, distraught mother (1 Kings 17:17-24)	Raises a woman’s son from the dead, by prayer and bodily contact, in an upper room in the presence of an angry, distraught mother (4:18-37)	Raises a widow’s son from the dead with a word (Luke 7:11-17)

Salvation, by military victory, for the whole nation (3:1-27)

Salvation for a faithful remnant, the ‘sons of the prophets’ (4:1-44)

Salvation for a Gentile (5:1-27)

Salvation for a faithful remnant, the ‘sons of the prophets’ (6:1-7)

Salvation, by military victory, for the whole nation (6:8 – 7:20)

Introduction: Is Christianity inclusive or exclusive?

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” (Matthew 7:13)

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6)

“And there is salvation in no one else [but Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

Beware the “inclusive church” movement

A little Hebrew lesson

נֶעָר	<i>Na-ar</i>	“Boy”
נֶעָר קָטָן	<i>Na-ar Qabtone</i>	“Little boy”
נֶעָרָה	<i>N-arab</i>	“Girl”
נֶעָרָה קָטָנָה	<i>N-arab Q-tanab</i>	“Little Girl”

MEET THE CAST

Elisha is the Christ figure

We have seen that Elisha prefigures Christ in many ways: his miracles, his baptism by a prophet at the Jordan, even his name.

The Little Girl (vv1-5)



Courageous

Compassionate

Inclusively-exclusive

Salvation is inclusive

Q: Who can be saved?

A: Anyone, even Syrians!

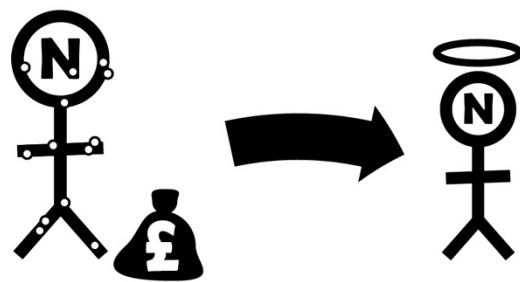
Yet it is exclusive

Q: How can Syrians be saved?

A: Only by the God of Israel

(not by Syrian gods)

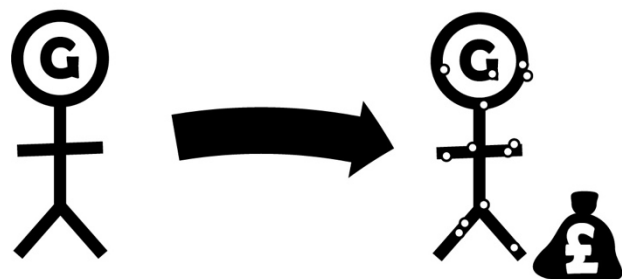
The Human Trafficker (vv5-19)



‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean’ (v10)

So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored *like the flesh of a little child*, and he was clean. (v14)

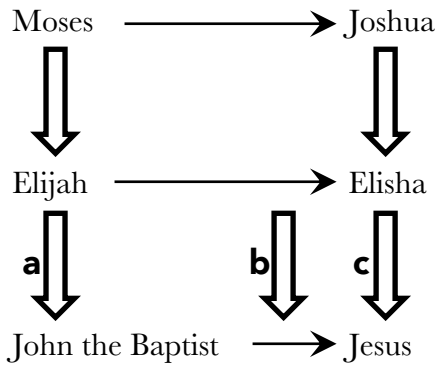
The Racist Disciple (vv19-27)



The assassin

(2 Kings 8-10)

Jesus is Elisha



1 Kings 19	Luke 3
Elijah is dismayed by the apostasy of Israel and calls for their repentance	John the Baptist is dismayed by the apostasy of Israel and calls for their repentance (vv7-14)
Elijah is told that his successor (Elisha) will bring judgment	John announces that his successor (Jesus) will come to 'burn with unquenchable fire' (v17)
Elijah is persecuted by Jezebel, wife of King Ahab	John is persecuted by Herodias, wife of King Herod (vv18-19)
Elijah anoints Elisha to begin his ministry	John baptises Jesus to begin his ministry (vv21-22)

Elisha brings salvation first

We expected Elijah to bring judgment. Instead comes bringing salvation!
We expected Jesus to bring judgment. Instead he comes bringing salvation!

But then the promised judgment comes (of course)

Elisha brings judgement

Elisha anoints the first assassin, Hazael, but with tears (2 Kings 8:7-15)

Elisha anoints the second assassin, Jehu, with a promise of total destruction (2 Kings 9:1-13)

It reminds us of someone else...

... who was also anointed as King
(e.g. John 1:41, cf. 2 Kings 9:3, 6)

... whose path was also paved with people's cloaks (e.g. Mark 11:7, cf. 2 Kings 9:13)

... whose also foretold terrible judgment on God's enemies, with tears (Luke 19:41-44, cf. 2 Kings 8:11)

	Memorable details	RECURRING THEME: Apostates change sides to join Jehu's 'remnant'	RECURRING THEME: God's word fulfilled
Joram and Ahaziah killed (9:14-29)	The repetition underlines Joram's desperate but futile search for reassurance: 'is it peace' (v17, v18, v19, v22). Jehu's answer comes in v22: there can be no peace where there is apostasy.	Joram's messengers on horseback now ride behind Jehu (vv18-20)	In 1 Kings 21:17-24, Elijah had promised that Ahab would be killed at the vineyard of Naboth, his victim, and that all his male descendants would be 'cut off'. Elisha reminded Jehu of this in 2 Kings 9:7-8, and now he orders that Joram be killed in the same place as his father 'in accordance with the word of the LORD' (2 Kings 9:25-26).
Jezebel killed (9:30-37)	Echoing her son, Jezebel asks 'is it peace?' but from her reference to Zimri (cf. 1 Kings 16:9-20) we infer she knows otherwise. She beautifies herself (v30) but soon all that's left of her is 'the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands' (v35); even the fingers have been chewed off by dogs.	Two or three eunuchs from Jezebel's household, throw her out the window in response to Jehu's cry, 'Who is on my side? Who?' (vv32-33).	In 1 Kings 21:23, the LORD said 'the dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel'. They do. It seems that Jehu has forgotten this prophecy and orders her burial, but God arranges events so his word comes to pass. (2 Kings 9:34-37)
Ahab's other sons killed (10:1-17)	The horrific image of heads shipped in baskets (v7) and piled high either side of the city gate (v8) is intended to lodge in our minds. There is a repeated emphasis on the totality of the judgment: 'all who remained... none remaining...he spared none of them...all who remained' (vv11,14,17).	The 'rulers of the city ... the elders... the guardians of the sons of Ahab' (v1) surrender to Jehu: 'we are your servants, and we will do all that you tell us' (v5). In response to his command, they assassinate their wards, and he pronounces them 'innocent' (v9), literally 'right'	'Jehu struck down all who remained to Ahab in Samaria, till he had wiped them out, according to the word of the LORD that he has spoke to Elijah' (v17)
Prophets of Baal killed (10:18-27)	As above, there is a repeated emphasis on the totality of the judgment: 'all the prophets of Baal, all his worshippers, and all his priests, let none be missing' (v18); 'the house of Baal was filled' (v21); 'all the worshippers of Baal' (v22). The author saves the best detail 'til last: they turn Baal's temple into a toilet (v27).	Jehonadab, is a little different. From the start his heart is true to Jehu (v15) and he co-orchestrates the plot against the prophets of Baal. (He is commended at length in Jeremiah 35)	

It's gruesome. But God says that it's right (10:30).

Application

Don't doubt that judgment is coming (cf. Acts 17:31)

Make the most of the period of salvation before judgement (cf. 2 Peter 3:8-9)

Don't get caught up with those on whom God's judgment is coming (8:16-29)

[Jehoram] walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done	<i>for</i> the daughter of Ahab was his wife (8:18)
[Ahaziah] also walked in the way of the house of Ahab and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD	<i>for</i> he was son-in-law to the house of Ahab. (8:27)

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them” (Ephesians 5:6-7)

Postscript – Elisha brings life even in death

2 Kings 13:14-25

Again, it reminds us of someone else...

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