

Handout: 1 Kings Lesson 8

Chapter 19 of the Elijah cycle Part I has three episodes:

1. Elijah's encounter with Jezebel and his journey to Mt. Horeb/Sinai (19:1-8)
2. Elijah's encounter with Yahweh at Horeb/Mt. Sinai (19:9-18)
3. The call of Elisha (19:19-21)

Forty is a significant number in Scripture, recognized as an important number both on account of the frequency of its occurrence and with the uniformity of its association as a time of consecration and as a period of trial. The number appears as time periods for both forty days and forty years in Scripture. Forty day periods in Scripture:

1. Forty day periods during the great Flood (Gen 7:4, 12, 17; 8:6).
2. Forty days Moses was on the mountain the first time to receive the Law of the Sinai Covenant during which the faith of the Israelites was tested (Ex 24:18).
3. Forty days Moses was on the mountain after the sin of the Golden Calf to receive new stone tablets and additional laws (Ex 34:28).
4. Forty days after his birth a male child of Israel was dedicated to God at the Sanctuary (Lev 12:1-4).
5. For forty days the Israelite spies reconnoitered the land of Canaan (Num 13:25).
6. Elijah traveled forty days and nights to Mt. Horeb/Sinai (1 Kng 19:8).
7. Jonah was to give the people of Nineveh forty days to repent (Jon 3:4).
8. For forty days Ezekiel lay on his right side to symbolize the forty years of Judah's transgressions (Ez 4:6).
9. For forty days Jesus fasted in the wilderness before His temptation (Mt 4:2; Mk 1:13; Lk 4:2).
10. Jesus taught the Church for forty days between His Resurrection and Ascension (Acts 1:3).

Elijah is told to anoint Elisha as his successor in the same way Moses anointed Joshua as his successor (Num 28:18-23). There are three holy offices in which Yahweh's agent is anointed for service: prophets, priests, and kings. See Dt 18:15-19; Heb 7:22-25; 8:12; 2 Sam 7:16, 29; 23:5; Lk 1:32-33; Acts 3:22-23; CCC 436, 1547. Jesus will fulfill all three:

1. He is the prophet prophesied by Moses.
2. He is the High Priest of the new and eternal covenant.
3. He is the rightful successor of King David and king of the eternal kingdom.

Elijah gave Elisha permission to say farewell to his family, but in Luke 9:62, Jesus refuses a similar request. In that passage Jesus was speaking of the radical transition that was taking place from the Old Sinai Covenant to the New Covenant in Christ that makes earthly ties a part of the things that are to be left behind when we enter God's heavenly Kingdom. The decision to follow Christ cannot only be an emotional enthusiasm but must be a resolute determination. There are three sacrifices that Jesus calls every would-be disciple to make in that passage:

1. The sacrifice of personal security and comfort.
2. The sacrifice of family duties and obligations.
3. The sacrifice of parental connection and to separate oneself from one's past life.

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