**A Study on Elijah-Part 2**

We are continuing today with part 2 on the life of the prophet Elijah found in I Kings

First and Second Kings was written to give us not only an accurate record of historical events but also to teach the lessons of history. It was Winston Churchill who said “Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it”

2 Tim. 3:16-17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

So far in I Kings 17, we have seen how Elijah learned to obey and trust in God, to wait on God and be content . He learned that God would provide for his daily needs and answer prayer in heartbreak and grief.

**Elijah** learned not only his “Dependence” on God, but that he could “Depend” on God. It’s one thing to be dependent on someone else, it’s another thing to know you can depend on them.

Chapter 17 - God who ‘Cares’ and ‘Provides’ for His people

Chapter 18 - God who ‘Challenges’ His people to Follow Him.

Chapter 19 - God who ‘Comforts’ His People.

Chapter 20 - God who ‘Continues’ His work despite the shortcomings of His people.

**I. The Showdown at Mt. Carmel - The God Who Challenges His People. I Kings 18;19-40**

( Both Elijah and the nation of Israel are put to the test: Elijah’s test – Trusting in God’s Power Israel’s test – would they choose to follow God.)

I Kings 18:1  After a long time, in the third year, the Word of the Lord came to Elijah: “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.” 2So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab.

A. Elijah sent to tell Ahab that the 3 ½ year drought was ending.

**NOTE:** 3 years have passed since Elijah and Ahab had last seen each other.. Elijah was in the wilderness being fed by ravens and later in Zarephath, with the Widow and her son. Zarephath was where the idols for Baal worship were melted down and molded. Zarephath means to smelt or to melt. The refining process for the idols was done there. It was here that Elijah’s faith was refined and purified.

Ahab could not find Elijah which was ironic. Jezebel’s father was Ethbaal, King of the Sidonians (or Phonicians). Sidon and Tyre were the two capital cities. Jezebel was actually born and raised in Sidon. Zarephath, was only 8.5 miles from Sidon. No one was more eager to kill Elijah than Jezebel and her Father and this is where God hides Elijah, the man on the most wanted list of Ahab. He not only searched Israel, but all the neighboring kingdoms. Ahab made them all give a sworn written statement that Elijah was not hiding in their borders. During this same time Jezebel was hunting down every true prophet in Israel and killing them.

I Kings 18:16  Ahab went to meet Elijah. When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?” “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the Lord’s commands and have followed the Baals. Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.” So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”. ‘But the people said nothing’.

Note: The drought came because the entire nation was under judgment for their idolatry, not just Ahab’s. Which was why the people said nothing…’did not commit themselves one way or the other’.

Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the Lord’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire—he is God.”

Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”

B. This was a showdown between the true God and the false god. The ‘battle of the gods’

1. The test was simple and basic, the people are invited to come watch.

a. How long will you waver: If Baal is god follow him, if The Lord is follow Him.

I Kings 18:21 “how long will you waver between two opinions?

2. “The people of Israel were indecisive, half-hearted, non-committed , double minded,

Split between two opposite worldviews. With a foot in both camps, there is

no way to stand for either” Cannot love God and mammon at the same time.

a. They sat on the fence  ( Josh 24:15 *“Choose this day who you will serve”)*

1) ”Life is a matter of choices, and every choice you make makes you and

sometimes it’s the smallest decisions that can change your life forever””

2) Judges 6 - Gideon tore down his father’s altar to Baal before God could

made them victorious over their enemy, the Midianites.

a) We can’t expect to have a victorious Christian life if we are sitting on the

fence with false gods one side and Jesus on the other. It doesn’t work.

3. This was a test of the sun god Baal who was said to be the god of weather.

It was for this reason God sent a drought and then later sent rain. Baal had already

been shown to have no control over the rain. Now, if Baal was really the sun god,

sending fire should be nothing to him. He is sometimes pictured with a bolt of

lightning in his hand. This showdown would show him false and the Lord as true.

a. Psalm 18:13 The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his

voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;

and he shot out lightning and discomfited them.

4. 450 Prophets of Baal and 400 Prophets of Ashtoreth come to Mt. Carmel . .

( remember Jezebel was a worshiper of Ashtoreth vs 20)

a. 850 prophets against one, and they have the home team advantage. The 850

don’t have to construct an altar, it’s already there. Elijah has to build one.

I Kings 18:26-29 “Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy (on the toilet), or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there *was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.”*

b. Elijah’s turn came to offer his sacrifice to God. 18:30-35

Elijah called the people together and prepared the bullock and the altar.

Then he asked the people to bring 12 barrels of water to pour on the wood,

sacrifice and altar. Elijah had prepared a trench around the alter to contain the

water. Remember this water a very precious and rare.

1) Elijah doused water on his sacrifice, then spoke a simple 63 word prayer vs 36

“Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are

God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your

command. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you,

Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again”

2) After this, the whole altar, rocks, everything was consumed with fire.

At this, the people saw God’s hand and shouted “*the Lord, He is God!*

*The Lord, He is God*”. *(this seems to imply they repented…at least* for a while)

3) Elijah had the 850 prophets brought down to the Kishon Valley and they

were slaughtered there. (The law stated that false prophets were to be killed)

**NOTE**: The great showdown between the Prophet Elijah and the 850 false prophets began

around 100 years earlier when King Solomon married many foreign wives. He allowed

his wives to worshipped their false gods and he built their altars and high places of

worship throughout Isreal.. He directly disobeyed God, .

a) Ahab married Jezebel, a foreign Sidonian Princess, but he wasn’t the first to do this.

Solomon also married a Sidonian princess. (history repeats itself)

**Elijah passes his test:** He called fire down, He believed in the power of God

**Israel passed their test**: The fell on their faces, “the Lord, is the true God” vs. 39

**II. The Return of the Rain (2nd test - Elijah’s Prayer for Rain)**

**I Kings 18:41-45** And Elijah said to Ahab, “Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.” So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

Mt Carmel:. Mount Carmel is located about 9 miles east of the Mediterranean Sea in the Carmel Mountain Range which is in the northern part of Israel. Carmel means “garden , orchard’. It was one of the many High Places of worship of Baal and Asherah , it also has a view of both the Mediterranean Sea and the Jezreel Valley, also known as the Valley of Armageddon. From Mount Carmel, you can even see Nazareth and Cana to the northeast.

“Go and look toward the sea,” he told his servant. And he went up and looked.

“There is nothing there,” he said. Seven times Elijah said, “Go back.” The seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.”

So Elijah said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.’” Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

A. Elijah prays for rain. James mentions this prayer in James 5:16-17

1. James 5:16 “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

a. ‘The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective’ NIV

2. James 5:17 Elias was a man of like passions, even as we are. He prayed

earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three

and a half years. Again he prayed and heavens gave rain and the earth produced

its crops.

a.. ‘Was a man of like passion’s: homoiopathes – suffering the like with

another, of like feelings or affections. He was human like us.

b. He ‘prayed earnestly;: prayed – verb, earnestly– noun, place set apart for

prayer.. (only time two words are used). ‘In praying, he prayed’.

c. He stopped everything…sat down in a place and prayed.

B. Elijah was persistent in his prayer. Servant sent 7 times…

1. It’s a lesson for us to keep praying. Pray without ceasing.. don’t give up on prayer.

a. Old term of ‘praying up a storm’. You ever pray up a storm ? We need to be

praying like that. Do we pray up a storm or does some mist just roll in ? (Alii Dr.)

b. Corrie ten Boom “Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire ?

2. Elijah was a man of prayer and his prayers were answered (He passed his test here)

a. Prayed it wouldn’t rain and it didn’t: Prayed that it would rain and it did.

c. Prayed for widows son and the boy came back to life

d. Prayed for Fire of God to consume the sacrifice and it did

3. Elijah prayed privately, on top the mountain, with his face between his knees.

a. He prayed in private. Do we enter into our closet and pray ? Mt 6 (serious)

b. His face was between his knees - humility shown. Does God see humility

when we pray ? It may be a throne of grace, but it is still a throne.

B. Power of Lord came on Elijah and he runs ahead of Ahab who is in his chariot and

he arrives at Jezreel first, 30 miles away. (Busy day for Elijah)

**III. Elijah Flees (3rd Test – Elijah’s Panic - Fear) Chapter 19**

I Kings 19:1-7 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.” Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness.

**A**. Elijah is *afraid* of Jezebel and flees. (No indication God is leading, fear and panic is)

1. Up to here in Elijah’s life, there is a pattern - God speaks, and Elijah obeys.

However, at this point we do not hear God speaking, we hear Jezebel.

a) Elijah hears the message from Jezebel and stops listening to God.

b) Fear overwhelms Elijah (God wants to take your fear and turn it into faith)

c) She was moved only to anger and not faith in God. She wanted revenge.

1) Hell hath no fury like a woman whose prophets have been killed.

2) She may have lost income here also. (like Saul in Ephesus)

2. So Elijah fled from Jezebel down to Be’er-sheva, which was on the southern border

of Judah. The phrase “ from Dan to Beer-sheva” was symbolic, referring the entire

Holy Land, from north to south” around 140 miles. Elijah traveled about 100 miles.

a. “Then, leaving his servant, the prophet journeyed a day’s journey further into the

Negev desert.”

b. He flees into the wilderness….(This is his 2nd wilderness experience)

1) First experience was in God’s will, this one is out of God’s will

I Kings 19:5-9 He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

“All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.”

B. He stops under a broom bush where the Angel of the Lord helps him.

1 He wants to die.. 5th prayer Elijah prays.…’take my life…’

2 The Angel here was a Christophany–manisfestation of Christ Himself in the OT.

a. No ravens or a widow, or any natural means. God sent the pre-incarnate Christ.

This shows God’s love and grace. He is personally involved here.

b. When Hagar and Ismael are forced to leave Abraham, they wander in the

desert, run out of food and water. Gen. 21:16,17..Then Hagar went off and sat

down about a bowshot away, for she thought ‘I cannot watch the boy die’.

And as she sat there, she began to sob.( Ishmael is crying also under the bush).

“God heard the boy crying.” The Angel of the Lord appears and shows her

where water is. God always hears us when we cry

C. Elijah keeps going to Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb, 150 miles south.

Took him 40 days to get there. He wasn’t going very fast. He had a lot of time to

think. Sometimes we need to take time and think things through. (4 miles a day)

1. “Sinai’ and ‘Horeb’ are generally considered to refer to the same place by scholars.

This is the mountain where Moses was given the 10 commandments. Ex. 19-24.

2. Elijah’s state: He had just come off of an incredible high facing the 850 prophets..

a. It was a tremendous display of not only the power of the LORD, but it also showed

that Elijah was a faithful prophet. This was a great victory for Elijah at Carmel

b.  There is no doubt that this would have been spiritually, mentally, emotionally,

and physically exhausting. (He had just run 30 miles to Jezreel)

c. We see Elijah’s humanity and weakness..

1) The time after a great victory can become our weakest time physically and

spiritually.

a) We may need a time out to be refreshed, revived and restored, so

we won’t grow weary or lose heart (Heb. 12:3)

b) Pride may set in also. You see this in his statement…”I am the only one of

the Lord’s prophets left” (He wasn’t the only one left)

3. Elijah goes from a spiritual high on t Carmel to a state of deep depression on Sinai.

a. Great men of God in the Bible had to deal with times of depression.

1) David went through many years of trauma with Saul and later his own sons.

a) .Job (Job 30:16-29) , Jeremiah ( Jer. 20:14,18), Naomi (Ruth 1:20.21),

Jonah (Jonah 4:3), Moses (Ex. 32:32), Hema- son of Korah wrote

Ps 88. which is described as one of the darkest Psalms in the Bible “

He ends the Psalm by saying “darkenss is my closest friend”.

Simon and Garfunkel song “Hello Darkness my old friend…”

b. Elijah goes from seeing and experiencing the mighty power of God to feeling

depressed, overwhelmed, afraid and alone. Probably the lowest point in his life.

D. Elijah’s Cave Experience - Elijah hears God in a new way, a different way than he had

known before. God encourages a discouraged Elijah…

19:10 -14 And the word of the Lord came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.” ( same question and answer repeated twice)

1. Word of the Lord comes to Elijah. “What are you doing here ?”

a. 132 time in the OT. “Word of the Lord came”.

b. Elijah says he has been zealous, but I’m all alone and they want to kill me.

2. Elijah told to stand at the mouth of the cave, the Lord would pass by.

a. Three acts of nature…great wind – earthquake – fire. God wasn’t in them

1) Zech. 4:6. ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit says the

3. Elijah hears a still small voice: Hebrew: “the sound of thin silence”.

The Biblical text calls ‘silence’ a sound. This could be a total complete silence.

a. KJ - “Still Small Voice”.. only used here in the OT. It’s in *contrast* to the strong

wind, the earthquake and the fire - ‘And after the fire the sound of a low

whisper’ ([1 Kings 19:12](https://www.biblestudytools.com/1-kings/19-12.html)).” Spurgeon called it ‘a voice of gentle silence” as if

silence had become audible.

b. This is far different than the “Word of the Lord” coming to him earlier.

4. God is speaking tenderly instead of with His mighty power. One writer said it this

Way: “In his weakness, anything more than a gentle God would have been too

much for Elijah to bear.”

a. Jesus spoke in different ways to people “Woe to the Pharisees” and gently with

others”… Mary, Mary, you are troubled about many things.

b. God speaks to us differently too, sometimes it is in a big way, other times He

is very tender and quiet.

1) Psalm 29:3 “The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory

thunders, the Lord thunders over many waters. The voice of the Lord is

powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.”

2) God is a gentle God. Sometimes His voice is gentle.

a. Matt. 11:29..take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am

gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls

b. Is. 40:31 “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the

lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead

those that are with young”. He gently leads those that are with young.

3) God spoke to Elijah with a small voice because that was what Elijah

needed at this time in his life.

a) God fed him on the way because he was exhausted, God feeds him

gently now in the spiritual sense.

b) The wind, fire and earthquake did not phase Elijah. He did not cower

from it. He just stayed in the cave.

c) This still small whisper was something new. This silence was new.

1. It was like the stillness after a storm. He went and stood in the

mouth of the cave because the still small voice had won the attention

of his soul. God used it to bring him out.

. a) What does God do to get our attention ?

2. Walking to the mouth of the cave, in his condition, was as

big a step of faith as he had ever took. God is drawing him out

of the darkness of his fear and isolation into His presence..

d) When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went

out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Vs. 13

1) He may have did this as a gesture of both respect and fear.

Moses in Ex. 3:6 did this also at the burning bush.

2) The seraphim fly above the throne of God: 2 wings cover their faces,

2 wings cover their feet and with 2 they fly. ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the

Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory.’ Is. 6:1-3

3) Elijah put his head down between his knees when he prayed.

4) God speaks to us today through His Word, through other people,

through Worship and Music, through nature and other ways we

would have never dreamed of. We just need to listen.

a) How well do we hear God speak to us. Do we need spiritual

hearing aids ? Maybe we need our hearing aids adjusted .

3. To hear a small voice you need to concentrate and shut other sounds out.

a. If there’s a stillness and quietness in my heart, *I will be able to hear God’s*

*whisper* Hard to hear a whisper in a crowded room with distractions.

C. The still small voice asks the same question again “what are you doing here ?”

1. Elijah answers the same as before.

a. “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have

rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death

with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

b. God doesn’t tell him he is repeating himself. God is patient with him,

helping him get back on track where we should be.

2. God tells him he is not alone.. 7,000 in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal.

**Note:** We should always rightly divide the Word of truth. Many claim to be the voice of God.

2 Pet. 2:1 Peter says there will be false teachers in the last day. Compare what is taught with what is already revealed in Scripture. We already have a ‘more sure word of prophecy.’ Peter says it is more reliable than even him hearing the voice of God on the Mt. of Transfiguration.

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**IV. Elijah’s Commission – Ch. 20 (Elijah still has work to do)**

A. Given 3 tasks: God gives Elijah something to do…gets him back on track.

1. Anoint Jehu King of Israel

2. Anoint Hazael King of Aram,

3. Appoint Elisha to be his successor

B. God still uses us despite our shortcomings.

1. We need to realize that **God will decide our legacies**.

a. We will not always live “the victorious Christian life” we see in inspirational

stories. Regardless of our struggles, doubts, and sins, God loves us and

continues to use us as we walk with Him. When we think it’s over,

God may see it as not even close to being over.

1) Admit your failures, weaknesses – when we are weak, He is strong,

2) Learn from your mistakes – don’t keep repeating them.

(Insanity is repeating the same mistakes over and over and expecting

different results),

3) Devote yourself to the Lord – learn to love Him with all your heart, soul,

mind, and strength. Everything else falls into place after that.

2. God is very patient and kind with us. Let’s be that with each other.

C. Elijah continues for 18 more years and has a productive and effective ministry.

What do we learn about God in these three chapters ?:

God challenges us to follow Him. Day by day, moment by moment choice..

God dealt gently with Elijah and He deals gently with us

God still uses us after we fail, we can continue to serve Him, don’t give up. He has a plan.

Where do you find yourself today ? Whether you are going through a drought, living in your own Zarephath,, experiencing a Mount Carmel in your life, traveling through a desert or even stuck in a cave surrounded by storms, please realize that God is willing to meet you where you are and work with you to get you to the place He wants you to be.. He is patient and compassionate and is with you to the end and beyond. Keep focused on Him, trust and allow him to transform your life. Take time to listen to His voice.