

1 KINGS 19

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

FEAR, ISOLATION AND REFOCUS!

Last time we were together, we read about Elijah and the great cosmic battle on Mt. Carmel. We saw that God was making the point that He and He alone controlled the weather. Baal was powerless. We also saw how God, through Elijah, challenged the people, by asking them how long they would “limp” between two opinions. Either God was the God of Israel, or Baal was. While God answered the question in no uncertain terms, the people still had to answer the question for themselves. That question still has to be asked by each one of us. What is our answer?

This week, we will read of what happened in the aftermath of this great battle and that great, ensuing question. Most likely, it wasn't what you may have thought it to be. Let's look at chapter 19.

1Kings 19:1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how ^ahe had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, ^r“So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” ³ Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to ^sBeersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

1Kings 19:4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. ^tAnd he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” ⁵ And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.” ⁶ And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.” ⁸ And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food ^uforty days. ⁸

And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food "forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

- Ahab reported all that had happened on Mt. Carmel. Jezebel is furious about all her prophets being killed.
- She sends a messenger to Elijah saying that he would be dead by the same time tomorrow. She has a good track record of killing the prophets of God.
- Elijah feared for his life and fled 120 miles, to the south of Judah. This is about as far away as he can get from Jezebel. He was out of her "jurisdiction."
- He left his servant at Beersheba and then went further away, into the wilderness. The leaving of his servant is telling.
- Elijah sat down under a Broom tree, (this is a large, leafy shrub), where he asks to die, for he is no better than his fathers before him.
- This is why Elijah left his servant behind. He is done! He is saying, "I can't do this anymore! The work is too stressful, too exhausting and hasn't born any fruit!" He sees himself as being no better, no stronger in his faith than any of his predecessors.
- Elijah is scared and depressed. He wants to quit and has isolated himself. Isolation is the opposite of what we should do when we are depressed.
- He asks to die, but God, in a roundabout way, answers this prayer with a resounding, "NO!" It is a good thing when God doesn't answer our prayers in the way we want. God isn't through with Elijah, though he wants God to be done with him. He isn't thinking well.
- In his exhausted mental state, he falls asleep under the Broom tree. An angel wakens him and tells him to eat. God has provided food and water in a supernatural means once again. Elijah eats and then goes back to sleep.
- He is awakened by an angel a second time. He is fed once again, supernaturally, but this time he is told that he is to eat, "for the journey is too great for him."
- Provision and rest. God knows this is what is needed. Though Elijah is running from his troubles, and in some ways, God; God has never left him.
- This meal sustained him for 40 days and nights. [Hyperlink to the flood, wilderness wandering and Moses on Mt. Sinai.](#) The number 40 is used to convey a time of trial or judgment, a time to be with God. Also, think of Jesus in the wilderness.

- Elijah then arose and journeyed further South to Horeb, or Mt. Sinai. We aren't told that God ordered him to go there. Personally, I don't believe God did, but God knows that he is going there. In Elijah's mind, I believe he went there in order to further hear from God. And he is also fleeing further from Jezebel. Remember, Elijah wants out of the "prophet business." Now we will see how all this gets sorted.

1Kings 19:9 *There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, ^wthe word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He said, "I have been very ^xjealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, ^ythrown down your altars, and ^zkilled your prophets with the sword, ^aand I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." ¹¹ And he said, "Go out and ^bstand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and ^ca great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind ^dan earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. ¹³ And when Elijah heard it, ^ehe wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, ^fthere came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁴ He said, ^x"I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, ^ythrown 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." ¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. ¹⁶ ^gAnd Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and ^hElisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. ¹⁷ And the one who escapes from ⁱthe sword of Hazael ^jshall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu ^kshall Elisha put to death. ¹⁸ ^lYet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not ^mkissed him."*

- Elijah shelters in a cave, when God speaks to him.
- **"What are you doing HERE?"** This is not where he is supposed to be, but it is also, at this time, in one sense, where he needs to be. God wants him to

continue the work He has for him to do, but God also knows that Elijah is in need of some down time and ministering.

- God works the same way with us today. He knows when we are in need of rest, provision, and need to hear from Him in a more personal way. Though Elijah is running and wants to quit, don't hammer him. We have all been in the same boat. And God wants to minister to him. No one knows what we need, better than God, Himself.
- Elijah's answer to the question is telling. He states that he has been zealous, (faithful and active). This shows us that he feels that his situation is unfair!
- The people have forsaken God's covenant, thrown down all the altars to God and have killed the all the prophets. This shows us that he feels there has been no fruit from all his labors. Now he feels that he and he alone, is walking with God.
- Remember that all of Elijah's fear, depression and isolation – his feeling that in spite of all he has done, no fruit has come of it, comes on the heels of a great victory and boldness!
- How quickly we forget the victories God has given us! (I'm preaching to myself). Once again, Elijah needs a personal encounter with God.
- God answers Elijah's question, but not in the way we might expect. This is an object lesson.

¹¹ And he said, "Go out and ^bstand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and ^ca great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind ^dan earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.¹ ¹³ And when Elijah heard it, ^ehe wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, ^fthere came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

- A strong wind – God wasn't in it.
- An earthquake – God wasn't in it.
- A fire – God wasn't in it.
- Elijah had just come off of a great, miraculous, supernatural manifestation of God's power. He was then threatened, got scared, and fled. All of this

has brought him to Mt. Sinai. He stayed in the cave through all three of these demonstrations, but God was nowhere to be found in them.

- Finally, a low whisper brought him out of the cave and Elijah, in fear and humility, wrapped himself in his cloak and walked to the mouth of the cave. And it was there that God spoke to him again.
- A second time – **“What are you doing HERE, Elijah?”**
- Elijah answers in the same way as he did the first time God asked the question. He still doesn’t get it.
- God knows what Elijah needs. And he knows what we need also.
- Elijah doesn’t need isolation and too much introspection. That will only lead further into depression and feelings of failure. He needs a task. He needs to get busy about the mission for which he has been prepared.
- The same goes for us. Sitting around the house, wallowing in self-pity, feelings of failure, and isolation don’t do anyone any good. We have to be busy. But we can’t be busy doing just anything in an attempt to keep our minds off our worries. That is just escapism. We have to be busy doing what it is we were created to do – being imagers of God and serving others. That is a good busy, not an escapist type of busy. So, God gives him his next assignment. It is both therapeutic and accomplishing the will of God. Think about that. Doing the will of God is therapeutic. Meditate on that.
- Elijah’s marching orders.

¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. ¹⁶ ⁹And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and ^hElisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. ¹⁷ And the one who escapes from ⁱthe sword of Hazael ^jshall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu ^kshall Elisha put to death. ¹⁸ ^lYet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not ^mkissed him.”

Apart from the marching orders, we see that God is once again moving in ways that we may not readily see. We see that Elijah is going to get some help and companionship. Elisha will come on board to not only help Elijah, but to also keep the work going after Elijah is removed from the scene, (Elijah won’t die, but is taken away in a whirlwind). This is therapeutic for Elijah.

We also see that Elijah's ministry had born fruit, even though he couldn't see it in his present state. There were at least 7,000 people in Israel that hadn't bowed to Baal. (The number 7).

Keep in mind the political scene in Israel. We have seen God installing and removing kings in order to accomplish His will. We see here that God is pulling the levers and pushing buttons not only as it has to do with Israel's king, but also as it has to do with Syria's king. We are meant to see that God is in control of earthly leaders. It seems to be slow and seamless – as if things are occurring naturally, but God is actually moving things along. Always remember this. God is in control.

We also see that justice will be done. This is what is meant by the phrases that refer to those who are put to the sword.

Contrary to what he thinks, Elijah's ministry has been fruitful, he will get some help, justice will be done, and God is in control. The very fact that another king will sit on the throne of Israel means that Ahab's reign, and even more importantly, as far as Elijah is concerned, Jezebel's days are numbered. Elijah comes out of this smelling like a rose!

1Kings 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 ⁿhis cloak upon him. ²⁰ And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, ^o“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?” ²¹ And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh ^pwith the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

Elijah finds Elisha plowing the field. There are 12 yoke of oxen. This tells us that Elisha's family is wealthy. Elijah casts his cloak on Elisha, which is a sign that Elijah is calling him to follow him. Elisha excitedly responds by saying he will be right there after “kissing” his parents, goodbye. Elijah seems to blow him off as if he doesn't care. This can be taken a couple of ways - but suffice it to say that he continues on and the boy can follow if he so desires.

Elisha sacrifices his oxen, meaning that he is walking away from his financial means and provisions. He is walking away from land and wealth in order to follow Elijah and God. Look at how Elisha is acting in contrast with Elijah. Elijah still has to work through some stuff.

APPLICATION:

- **Fear can quickly take us to depression and off track with God's will in our lives. How should we respond?**
- **Not by isolation and too much introspection. Just the opposite: fellowship and activity, searching out the will of God. Not sitting around waiting for something to do.**
- **Seek an encounter with God. Read and STUDY His word!**
- **God doesn't always move in the big, loud events of our lives. Many times, maybe most of the time, He speaks in a still, small voice.**
- **God wants to move people into your life to be of help to you, but He also wants to move you into other people's lives in order that you can help them – in order that we can all help each other.**
- **Elijah failed in the very point that he was the strongest. We can easily fall into the "mullygrubs" right after a great victory. Fear and failure skew our view of our circumstances and take us down the road of depression and isolation.**
- **He saw only failure, though there had been fruit in his ministry. Elijah wasn't alone!**
- **And he had no reason to fear! The same God who had protected him right under Jezebel's nose was still there to protect him. And now Elijah has the mission to anoint the king who would depose her and her husband.**
- **How quickly we can move from victor to victim!**
- **You have been victorious in the past, so why are you HERE? In this state?**
- **Be still and listen for God – not just in the big things, but in the small things also.**
- **Get re-focused and back on track!**