

I Kings Lesson 19

I Kings Chapter 19

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Website: www.KjvBibleStudies.net

E-mail: mailKjvBibleStudies@gmail.com

I. Elijah's Flight and Despondency

1Ki 19:1 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

1Ki 19:2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

Ahab arrives in Jezreel and tells Jezebel all that Elijah had done. Elijah flees to Beersheba, and then further into the wilderness. Ahab's report to Jezebel is disturbing to the queen. She responds with a threat to take Elijah's life. The wicked do not fear God like we do.

Romans 3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

“So let the gods do to me, and more also...”

1 Kings 21:23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

2Ki 9:30 And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.

2Ki 9:31 And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?

2Ki 9:32 And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.

2Ki 9:33 And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot.

2Ki 9:34 And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter.

2Ki 9:35 And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.

2Ki 9:36 Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel:

2Ki 9:37 And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.

1Ki 19:3 And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.

1Ki 19:4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat

down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

Elijah runs for his life. I've always found this account interesting. Elijah can face down King Ahab and the 450 prophets of Baal, but his courage melts at the threat of Jezebel. It says that he sits down under a juniper tree and requests that he might die. Never be surprised that we may have a lapse of faith right after a great victory. Our spirit is sometimes very strong, but the flesh is very weak. That is why God has given us the Holy Spirit.

Elijah must have removed his eyes from the Lord. Peter was able to walk on water when he kept his eyes on the Lord.

Matthew 14:28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Elijah flees all the way to Beersheba in southern Judah, and then another day's journey into the wilderness. Elijah, no longer full of faith, sits and despairs under a juniper tree.

1Ki 19:5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

1Ki 19:6 And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

1Ki 19:7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.

God made special provisions for Elijah. Elijah may have experience a moment of lack of faith, but our God never is unfaithful to His children. It seems likely that Elijah is exhausted from all the recent activity after leaving the home of the widow woman. When we are physically weak, we are also spiritually weak, in the sense that we are more susceptible to the Devil's attacks. When did Satan tempt our Lord? After He had fasted forty days and forty nights.

Matthew 4:1-3 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

Elijah fled from Jezebel, and now sits weary of life because of his failure. However, God is not finished with Elijah. While he is spiritually and physically weak, God is careful to meet all of Elijah's needs.

1Jn 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

1Jn 3:19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

1Jn 3:20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

1Jn 3:21 *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

1Jn 3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

1Ki 19:8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

1Ki 19:9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

This special food kept Elijah going for forty days and forty nights. We know the number of 40 is the number of testing. God is always faithful to enable us to accomplish the work He has called us to do. However, what He would have us to accomplish is not necessarily the same as what we might wish to accomplish. Even though weak, despondent and defeated, Elijah still follows the Lord.

John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

True children of God will not altogether forsake the Lord. Elijah went to Mt. Horeb in says in verse 8. Remember that Mt. Horeb and Mt. Sinai are two names for the same place. This is where God delivered the law to Moses. The word of the Lord comes to Elijah; this time in a question of rebuke. “What doest thou here, Elijah?”

1Ki 19:10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

1Ki 19:11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

1Ki 19:12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

Elijah attempts self-justification and tells God all that he has done and how that only he was left in service to the Lord. Elijah was accustomed to God manifesting Himself in great ways. God passes by Elijah and causes a mighty wind, and an earthquake, and then a fire; but God was not in any of these. Finally, God speaks to Elijah in “a still small voice.” The question is, will Elijah heed the still small voice? God can speak through great tragedies, but isn’t it better to hear the still small voice?

1Ki 19:13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle,

and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

1Ki 19:14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

1Ki 19:15 And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria:

Elijah covers his face as one afraid to look upon the glory of God, or perhaps in shame. The same question is presented as to "What doest thou here, Elijah" and Elijah delivers the same answer. He says again that only he is left in the service of the Lord. He receives his final test and instruction with encouragement. "Go, return on thy way." Hazael was to be anointed king over Syria.

1Ki 19:16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

1Ki 19:17 And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.

1Ki 19:18 Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

Jehu is to be anointed king over Israel in verse 15. It says that Elisha is to be anointed a prophet. Elijah will not serve alone, nor need worry about who will carry on the work. God declares that He has all matters in hand. Finally, God reveals that Elijah is not alone, but that there are still 7000 in Israel who have not bowed their knees to Baal. When we think it is just us in the work of the Lord, we need to look about us. God has many faithful servants in the work of the Lord. Here the question is, will Elijah be obedient and serve the Lord?

II. Elijah Obediently Seeks Elisha

1Ki 19:19 So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

1Ki 19:20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

Elisha receives the divine call into service there in verse 19. The mantle was a vest-like garment common to the prophets of God. It set them visibly apart from others.

Zec 13:4 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

Zec 13:5 But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

Elisha is tested by Elijah. He leaves the oxen and runs after Elijah. Elisha is ready to bid farewell to his family and to ready to follow Elijah.

1Ki 19:21 And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

But Elijah urges him to go back; will Elisha be obedient to the call of God? His oxen become a farewell feast, and the instruments become the fuel. Elisha is determined to serve the Lord.

A. W. Pink in his book "Gleanings from Elisha" had this to say.

Elisha left his worldly employment, the riches to which he was heir, his parents and friends, and threw in his lot with one who was an outcast.

In spite of Elijah's temporary failure, the situation in Israel did improve somewhat because of God's great victory over Baal. Not only were the 450 prophets of Baal purged, but we find that the Lord's prophets have a measure of liberty in Israel. There are even schools for the training of prophets:

2 Kings 2:3 The sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha....

2 Kings 2:5 And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha.

2 Kings 6:1-2 And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

God also begins to visibly bless the nation Israel, in spite of Ahab and all the infidelities, by giving them victories over their enemies.

* Additional Comments added by E.L. Bynum in Jan. 2014

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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E-mail: mailKjvBibleStudies@gmail.com

Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.