

## THE JOURNEY IS TOO GREAT FOR THEE

### 1 KINGS 19:1 – 20:43

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~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God examined a wildly dramatic scene between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on top of Mount Carmel in our previous report and, in this report, we come to the chapter in the life of this remarkable prophet where he has simply had enough. It's difficult to believe we're considering the same deeply sarcastic man who challenged and defeated the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal *and* the four hundred prophets of Jezebel in the last chapter. In this chapter, Elijah seems to be an altogether different man; and I understand completely, because Jezebel sent a death threat to him when he openly defied her by denouncing the prevalent idolatry of Baal worship she was perpetrating in Israel. Yes, friends, I fully understand Elijah's frustration....

### **XIX**

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

***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.***

***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.***

~ "That" in verse three is the message sent from Jezebel. Elijah's strength and courage were drained by this letter. See, Elijah took his eyes off of the Lord when he read Jezebel's letter; and, when we take our eyes off of God, we'll always run for our lives. Remember, Simon Peter took his eyes off of Jesus, and began looking at those furious waves – and he began to sink – and Jesus had to help Peter back into the boat. Well, Elijah's heart is sinking here, to be sure; and, while his heart is sinking, he also begins to run. If you have a good Bible with maps, you'll know Beersheba is as far south as one

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can go in Israel – but Elijah just kept going when he got there. That leaves Elijah WAY out in the wilderness....

***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.***

~ Well, I always wondered: who told Elijah he was better than his fathers in the first place? That statement revealed to the Lord Elijah was finally learning something. Candidly, I feel that acknowledgement is why the Lord suddenly becomes so loving and comforting. It also reveals Elijah likely *DID* believe he was better than his father's up until this moment. That's revelation. That's growth in the Lord. Even so, Elijah still wants to die. He has had enough of eschatology. We're witnessing quite a change from the Elijah we know and love from our preceding reports. Sitting under a tree hiding from a woman just doesn't seem to fit Elijah's style. Ahab didn't care what had happened to the false prophets Elijah had killed. Genocide was a good day at the office for Ahab. Jezebel, on the other hand, hated Elijah for what he had done; and she isn't about to sit idly by and let it go. She becomes obsessed with having Elijah's head served to her on a platter after this.

Friends, it was no light moment in our previous report when Elijah stood before the altar of God and prayed for the fire to fall from Heaven. The slaying of eight hundred fifty prophets was horrendous and sickening to witness. Immediately after that, almost on command, a rainstorm began; and Elijah had to send Ahab home as quickly as he could before Ahab wouldn't be able to get back home. That was a victory for Elijah if you ask me. Well, instead of riding high on victory, Elijah runs as far away as he can get. The mental picture of Elijah curled up in depression underneath a tree makes me a little embarrassed of him; except that I fully understand his mental state – having been there so many times myself. Elijah wasn't singing hymns about "*Down in the Dumps I'll Never Go*" – because the devil had Elijah very low at this time in which we are studying; and Elijah didn't lie to himself. He listened to God.

The extremely pious intellectual would have admonished Elijah to remain optimistic, positive and cheerful in adverse circumstances. Most of us would have advised Elijah to smile and laugh at Jezebel and the world would laugh with him. Most Christians would have pointed Elijah to Romans eight verse twenty-eight – if Romans had been written at this time – and told him to just trust God and everything will be alright. Well, friends, Elijah is already trusting God. And Elijah isn't smiling because everything is *NOT* alright in Elijah's world. A sermon was preached many years ago entitled "*Breathe Bright and Brotherly*" – and this was the paraphrased text. Well, I hate to tell you this, but Elijah didn't feel bright and brotherly towards Ahab and Jezebel. Some wonder what has happened to the prophet that said, "*... if God be the Lord then follow Him!*"

Well, if you want the ideology for the disease Elijah is suffering from, we should examine his primary symptom. There was a physical malady caused by Elijah being overworked, overwrought – and that always leads to being overly worried. The physically exhaustive stress probably took several days to recover from after the Mount Carmel incident. Don't kid yourselves, friends; standing for God is a soul depleting task. If it isn't, then you're not doing it correctly. Most self-appointed pastors, evangelists and Bible teachers know *NOTHING* about that truth – and why? – Because they do not stand for God.

The dominant sin in the ministry is not finances, friends. Most people think it is, and most religious leaders today operate nothing but a religious racket. For them, it's *all* measured in money. But in a genuine ministry of Christ Jesus, that's not the problem. The three biggest sins of any genuine ministry are pride, being boresome, and laziness! Most people never find themselves under the Juniper Tree because they never do anything meaningful for God. We know there were seven thousand others who never bowed the knee to Baal; but they weren't under the Juniper Tree with Elijah, either. They're tucked away safely in some cozy cave hoping Elijah prevails. They never stood on the lofty heights of Mount Carmel, and they'll never see the otherwise indescribable event of fire coming down from Heaven, either.

Elijah stood alone as a prodigal of his own physical strength! I'm sure someone whispered in Elijah's ear, "... you're trying to do too much!" Someone certainly told Elijah to "... take it easy!" Well, Elijah never would have run from Jezebel if he hadn't been exhausted. See, we need men today who are willing to take a hard stand for God, friends. But it has to be done the right way. God's way – not your way. I hear a lot about people being dedicated to the Lord but, frankly, I don't see many of us doing anything worthwhile for Him. Most so-called Christians are as lazy and careless in the work of the Lord as they can be. Most don't even care about spelling or grammar in their communications. Some people say, "... I'm sorry I'm just not that smart." – to which I reply, get smart – or get out of the business of trying to minister to people. They cannot comprehend the profundity of the abject ignorance they insist on.

Well, there's more: the psychological fear factor Elijah experienced was unbearable. Hypertension is a leading diagnosis in our contemporary mental health field; although the official diagnosis has been renamed several times. Our society and worldly existence is one of frustration, sterility, frigidity, rigidity, nervous debilitation and disappointment, discouragement, despondency, discontentment and dismay. Most commentary I read on the prophet Elijah reveals a woeful Biblical illiteracy. He concealed a sensitive soul ruled by emotions; which took him through a range of mindset elations and dejections. I'm sure Elijah possessed the finer sensibilities of artistic taste and aesthetic nature. I'm also confident I would have concluded Elijah's psychological evaluation as that of manic-depressive psychosis with anti-social tendencies. When all of this very bad condition catches up with Elijah, he cries out for God to take his life....

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

***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.***

***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.***

~ The Lord knew Elijah needed rest. We know a typical man or woman only wants to sleep when they are depressed. I think God Himself put Elijah to sleep – and there were no sleeping pills involved. I seriously doubt Elijah had been eating properly at this time, too. Well, the same One cooked this cake for Elijah Who prepared the breakfast for the apostles on the shore of Galilee on the morning after the resurrection, you may recall – the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s how God comforted Elijah before putting him to sleep again. Elijah needed a lot of rest. Now, God tells Elijah He knows the journey was too great for him. Those who say God never gives them more than they can handle, well, they’re no Elijah’s, I suppose. Friends, I have no idea who really reads these reports. What I do know is: the journey is too great for you. You’re going to realize that fact one day. I hope it will not be learned the hard way....

***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.***

***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?***

~ See, the strength Elijah received wasn’t used to return to Israel and stand for God – Elijah used it to run and keep running. God is dealing very definitely with Elijah. Elijah has discovered he truly needs psychological help. Godly psychological help. All of our problems could easily be solved by crawling on the couch of our Great Physician – the Lord Jesus. Most are too proud to do that. If we would tell Him *everything* in prayer, our lives would be so much better; and we wouldn’t feel compelled to tell the world our problems, which is always a huge mistake. I honestly cannot believe some of the things people disclose about themselves on social media. Most of the people we reach out to have their own problems they don’t know how to deal with. The probability is they can’t help you with yours. Well, Elijah was just like us: we sometimes think we’re the only ones remaining who truly stands for God....

***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.***

***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:***

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

~ Apparently, Elijah loved a good storm with a severe subsequent earthquake; and we know he loved fire falling from Heaven. That's the kind of prophet he was. But, as we read on, God isn't in those things. God was in the one thing Elijah didn't care for: a still small voice! I doubt Elijah ever used a still small voice, to be frank. Elijah had to learn this is the way God moves; and it is wonderful. See, the battle wasn't won on the top of Mount Carmel when fire came down. No, God truly moves in a mysterious way – His wonders to perform. God moves quietly and gently using weak and little things to accomplish big plans and purposes. Monstrous doors swing on very small hinges....

***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?***

***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.***

***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:***

**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.**

**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.**

**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.**

~ It's always a remnant God uses; and we have been unkind to the seven thousand on safari. See, they weren't out in the open working for God as Elijah was. These are silent ones who never did anything. I can only guess they prayed for Elijah; but I don't find where they ever supported him. What are *YOU* doing to support the man who teaches you the Bible properly, correctly and completely? Are you doing anything for that man? If not, then may I say this kindly? – You're one of those hiding in a cave somewhere making no difference whatsoever for the cause of Christ. We need to examine ourselves, my Christian friends. Let us look in the mirror of Scripture and report an honest conclusion of what we're doing – or not doing. See, even Elijah is going to be removed and replaced by Elisha. Do you think God will have any compunction with replacing either one of us? I don't....

**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.**

**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?**

**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.*

## **XX**

~ This chapter brings a campaign by the king of Syria against Israel. Up to this point in their history, God has not permitted any outside nations to invade Israel. Well, there's a first time for everything; and here it is. Even so, God promises the victory – even to Ahab – which is remarkable! See, God gave King Ahab every opportunity to turn back to Him. Today, we hear about lost opportunities and how it only knocks once – and all that; personally, I think opportunity knocks all day long on most of our doors. God promises Ahab a victory and God delivered said victory over the Syrians – even when Ahab didn't deserve it. You may want to meditate on this a while. Verse twenty-seven is a vivid picture! The only mistake Ahab made was sparing the life of the king of Syria. Ahab was told to eliminate the enemy; and God wasn't kidding. When God commands us to do something in His Word, He means it. There is no compromise by God with sin; He will never bless unrighteousness. That's what we're talking about here! It's difficult for a sinner to discern when to judge another man of sin. Obviously, Ahab couldn't bare to point the finger at himself....

***1 And Benhadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it.***

***2 And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Benhadad,***

***3 Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine.***

***4 And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.***



**5 And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Benhadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children;**

**6 Yet I will send my servants unto thee to morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away.**

**7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not.**

**8 And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not unto him, nor consent.**

**9 Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Benhadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again.**

**10 And Benhadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.**

**11 And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.**

**12 And it came to pass, when Benhadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array. And they set themselves in array against the city.**

**13 And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.**

**14 And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou.**

**15 Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand.**

**16 And they went out at noon. But Benhadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him.**

**17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Benhadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria.**

**18 And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.**

**19 So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them.**

**20 And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Benhadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse with the horsemen.**

**21 And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.**

**22 And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee.**

**23 And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.**

**24 And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms:**

**25 And number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so.**

**26 And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Benhadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel.**

**27 And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country.**

**28 And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.**

**29 And they pitched one over against the other seven days. And so it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day.**

**30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men that were left. And Benhadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber.**

**31 And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life.**

**32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother.**

**33 Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, Thy brother Benhadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Benhadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot.**

**34 And Benhadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.**

**35 And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him.**

**36 Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him.**

**37 Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him.**

**38 So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face.**

**39 And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver.**

**40 And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it.**

**41 And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets.**

*42 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.*

*43 And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria ~*