



Elijah Series #4 “Lessons from the Palace Part 2”

Introduction

There are two stages to our study of the life of Elijah.

First, we want to examine the passage.

The provided outline provides some sort of logical structure to the passage.

We want to examine God’s interaction with Elijah.

We want to examine God’s intervention in human history.

We want to examine Elijah’s response to God and his journey of faith.

We want to examine Elijah’s interaction with people and circumstances.

We want to examine people interaction with God and Elijah.

Second, we want to extract the universal principles embedded in the passage. There are lessons to be learned from what God chose to record for all time. Even though the passage describes things directly related to Elijah and the specific times, we do find a certain possible principle that relate to our life today. Some of the issues that Elijah faced are not all that different from the times in which we live in the circumstances which we encounter. The periods in Elijah’s life follow a definite instruction from the Lord.

“And the word of the Lord came to Elijah”

The response to that instruction was nearly always prompt obedience.

I. Lessons from the Palace where Elijah boldly announced God’s judgment for sin. 1 Kings 17:1

Elijah confronted Ahab the King of Israel for leading the whole nation into decadent Baal worship. Elijah announced that God would withhold rain for a period of 3 ½ years.

II. Lessons from the brook where Elijah learned to trust God in obscurity and isolation. 1 King 17:2-7

Following the brief but dramatic confrontation in the palace, God directed Elijah to a place of obscurity and isolation for a period of time. It was there that God protected and provided. He commanded ravens to feed him twice a day and enjoyed a continuous supply of water from the brook Cherith.

III. Lessons from Zarephath where Elijah learned to trust God in ministry 17:8-24

after a period of time the brook dried up God issued new direction to the town called Zarephath very close to King Ahab’s wicked wife Jezebel’s hometown.

It was there that God commanded a pagan destitute widow woman to provide for Elijah’s needs. It was there that Elijah learned some things about God and trust and prayer that would come into play in a greater arena in the near future. Today we follow Elijah back to the palace for another confrontation with King Ahab. We will examine the passage and try to extract the possible universal principles.

IV. Lessons from the Palace Part two 1 Kings 18:1-19

A. Elijah received new instructions to confront Ahab 1 Kings 18:1

Now it came about after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth."

Again, Elijah learned to be content wherever God placed Him. It had been three years since the first encounter that began Elijah’s journey. Three years of either obscurity or limited interaction and ministry. Elijah was content to stay put until God revealed the next step. Several years serving the needs of a widow and her son not in complete isolation but definite obscurity. God does not always give specific direction for every event, every day.

I am not sure what Elijah did during that time but I am sure he didn't stay idle.

God expects us to operate by the wisdom gained through our interaction with Him and a knowledge of His will. Paul prayed that the Colossians be filled with the knowledge of His will. The last specific direction given to Elijah was to go to the widow's house. For three years he continued to live day by day in his relationship with God.

Elijah received new instructions to go talk to Ahab again. The last time he talked to Ahab the ruthless, idolatrous king was to pronounce judgment in the form of a devastating drought. Ahab and his murderous wife had been looking for him. The drought caused things to get really bad and it was all Elijah's fault.

Now God instructed him to show himself to Ahab. Before this point, God told him to stay clear of Ahab. Now he told him to go show himself to Ahab. Reenter the fray.

B. Elijah promptly obeyed 1 Kings 18:2

So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab.

Once again Elijah promptly obeyed the Word of the Lord. He was willing to take on the uncomfortable, difficult and life-threatening task. Elijah had a heart for obedience knowing that God had never let him down yet. He learned previously to trust God and stood ready to face whatever God had next. God allowed pressure to come on Ahab and the people through the severity of the famine. Sometimes **EVERYBODY** suffers for the rebellion of a leader, group or nation.

God operates by an interesting economy. He links us all together so we have no choice but to live and work together. This step was not to obscurity and isolation or even one-on-one ministry.

This time, God called Elijah not to the comforts of house and home but into the conflicts of warfare for the kingdom of God.

C. Ahab commissioned Obadiah to search for water

Verse three provides a glimpse into the events from the palace point of view.

Now the famine was severe in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah who was over the household.

1. Obadiah's character

(Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly; for it came about, when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.) Verse 12 "I your servant have feared the Lord from my youth."

How interesting that a God fearing man would be in charge of Ahab's household.

God continually maintains a godly influence even in grave situations of devastating ungodliness and darkness.

2. Obadiah's commission

Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle." So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.

Here we have a graphic illustration of the severity of the famine in the land.

3. Obadiah met Elijah on the way.

Now as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is this you, Elijah my master?"

This is not a chance meeting. God deliberately caused Elijah to hook up with Obadiah. We call the “divine encounters.”

4. Elijah asked Obadiah to announce his presence to Ahab

And he said to him, "It is I. Go, say to your master, 'Behold, Elijah is here.' "

5. Obadiah expressed his reservations to Elijah

And he (Obadiah) said, "What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab, to put me to death?"

It seems everybody had a keen sense of sin when confronted with difficult tasks.

“Ahab will kill me!” Obadiah feared the Lord but also was afraid of Ahab.

It is a difficult thing not to fear people. Many of the giants of the faith stumbled over their fear of people.

Moses – ran from Pharaoh

David – ran from the Philistines

Abraham and Isaac both lied because of fear.

Peter denied Christ because of fear

Elijah will later run because of his fear of Jezebel.

Fear is an emotion that rises up within us in us at the presence of or perception of possible pain (physical or emotional) or loss (physical, circumstantial, relational).

The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted. Proverbs 29:25

Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice. "Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the LORD." But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28

Nevertheless, many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God. John 12:42-43

God did a great job protecting and providing for Elijah during this famine. Ahab commissioned a manhunt in every area and surrounding kingdoms. This should have been a clue to Obadiah that God could also take care of him. But Obadiah expressed the heart of his objection.

"And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah is here." ' "And it will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the Lord will carry you where I do not know; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the Lord from my youth.

This servant was very aware of the supernatural way God protected Elijah. He was not sure however that that protection extended to him. He not only struggled with trust in God but trust in Elijah. Usually when we struggle trusting God, we also find it hard to trust people. In reality, our struggle usually involves our trust in God. Obadiah appealed to Elijah on the basis of his personal faithfulness. He still was afraid and not trusting God to protect him.

"Has it not been told to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord, that I hid a hundred prophets of the Lord by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water? And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah is here" '; he will then kill me."

The safest place for the child of God is in the center of the will of God. Yet Obadiah is convinced that Ahab will kill him. He needed a severe dose of the sovereignty of God.

6. Elijah promised to follow through

And Elijah said, "As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today." Elijah again appealed to his standing before God. He continued to apply lessons learned along the way. Elijah assured Obadiah that God would bring about His ultimate purposes.

D. Elijah confronted Ahab

1. Ahab's twisted perspective 1 Kings 18:16-17

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came about, when Ahab saw Elijah that Ahab said to him, "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?"

“trouble”, stir up, disturb

It is the task of the prophet of God to declare the truth of God. The prophet must continually remind people of God's perspective. Such proclamation of God's perspective may cause people to feel uncomfortable. From Ahab's perspective, Elijah was responsible for the current trouble in Israel.

2. Elijah's truthful divine perspective

And he said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed the Baals.

Again, it was his confidence in the person of God, the purpose and his specific standing and calling that equipped Elijah with the boldness and courage to stand up to Ahab. The famine was the result of Ahab's choice to obey Baal rather than God.

3. Elijah's bold proposal

"Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

Elijah called for a demonstration of whose God is the real God.

He called for a confrontation, a showdown, not only to bring judgment on the false prophets but to demonstrate to the insubordinate Israelites the power of the one true God. Elijah called for a public confrontation on Mount Carmel -- one prophet of God against all 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah empowered by the associated demonic forces. 850 plus to one! Obadiah was afraid of one king.

No more obscurity, no more isolation, no more one-on-one ministry. God directed him to the show down at the "Carmel corral." Baalism was a detestable demonic cult. All idol worship was demonically driven. The carved idols were merely a representation or image of the demonic power being worship.

*"But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked--You are grown fat, thick, and sleek--Then he forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation. They made Him jealous with strange gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. "They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new gods who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread. You neglected the Rock who begot you, And forgot the God who gave you birth. **Deut. 32:15-18***

*They did not destroy the peoples, as the Lord commanded them, but they mingled with the nations, and learned their practices, and served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with the blood. Thus they became unclean in their practices, and played the harlot in their deeds. **Psalm 106:34-39***

*I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. **1 Cor. 10:20-21***

The worship of Baal promised certain physical and sensual benefits.

The demons granted certain perks and fleshly incentives in exchange for glory and worship. It was a very sensual worship. The blessing and fertility granted by Baal was the result of sexual intercourse between Baal and Asherah. The people entered into this promise of fertility by relations with the temple prostitutes both male and female.

The people were enticed by the shallow sensual gratification of Baalism over against the internal spiritual obedience to Yahweh which held the promise of both temporal and eternal blessing. Any time the people shifted their focus from the eternal God to temporal idols they slid into sensual and sexual addiction. Elijah felt a compelling drive and passion to eliminate this destructive evil influence on the people of God. His mission was to eradicate idol worship altogether.

Possible Lesson #1 from the palace part two

God's assignments are not always comfortable but critical.

Not always easy but essential. Not always pleasant but powerful.

How do you decide whether to accept an assignment from God? Do you decide by whether it is easy or hard? Do you decide on the comfortable or hard factor?
Is there something you feel God has asked you to do that pushes you beyond your current comfort zone?
Do you avoid tasks because you think it is beyond your capabilities?

Possible Lesson #2 from the palace part two

God strategically places His "agents" everywhere.

What would happen if Christians refused to minister in the "evil palace?"

Think through your possible place. Would you move into a difficult neighborhood in order to minister?
Would you work for a pagan government organization?
Daniel worked for several pagan sovereigns with significant impact.
Obadiah served evil King Ahab.

Possible Lesson #3 from the palace part two

God connects resources along the way of obedience

Elijah was on his way to Ahab as instructed by God. Obadiah was on his way to search for water as instructed by Ahab. God caused their path to intersect where both recognize their objective.

We should always be on the lookout for God's divine appointments. He sends people our way prepared to aid in our tasks.
Can you think of any such times where God sent someone your way at just the right time?

Possible Lesson #4 from the palace

Only a renewed awareness of God's perspective and presence can conquer fear.

The only countermeasure to the enemy's fear "missile" is a renewed awareness of God's perspective and presence; fear of the LORD.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. Psalms 23:4

*'Do not fear them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you.' Deuteronomy 3:22
The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread? When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear; Though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be confident. Psalms 27:1-3*

From my distress I called upon the LORD; The LORD answered me and set me in a large place. The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me? The LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore I will look with satisfaction on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the LORD Than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD Than to trust in princes. Psalms 118:5-9

Fear is a struggle for many. The most effective way to address fear is to fight fear with FEAR. By that I mean a healthy FEAR of the Lord overcomes any fear of man or circumstances. If I realize that the God of the universe is not only with me but directing me, I am able to face whatever may come my way. Think about the things you fear. What difference does a divine perspective make on that fear? Contemplate the fear and then think what difference knowing a loving, all-powerful, all-knowing God directs the affairs of my life makes. Try completing this sentence in light of His presence...
Since God is _____ then _____.

I.e. Since God is fully aware of my struggle, I can trust He has something to teach me through it.

Possible Lesson #5 from the palace

Tough assignments are not punishment for sin.

So often we seem to associate bad events with sinful acts. Scripture makes it very clear we are to welcome difficulties and trials in life as friends as they serve a specific purpose. It is easy in times of fear to lose perspective. Obadiah was not thinking clearly. Why would the prophet of God ask him to do something that would result in his death? Obadiah, thinking only from his fear-limited perspective, assumed that Ahab would kill him. He assumed that Elijah also understood that and instructed him to do it anyway.

Since Elijah (the man of God) asked him to do something that would result in his death must mean that there was sin in his life. He focused on the circumstance rather than the God of circumstances. We often share similar feelings. We fear what might happen more than trust what God will cause to happen. We doubt that he really has our best interest at heart. He is only out to punish us.

Our belief is not that God will protect us from every painful and uncomfortable situation but that He holds the master plan and that He promises never to leave us alone in difficult situations. Along with those difficult situations God promises to provide the necessary resources to go through it, over it, under it or stay in it until God's purposes are achieved. We would rather orchestrate our lives so that we don't have to face these dangers. Obadiah already risked his life to hide and provide for the prophets of God. But a moment, he struggled.

"As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to search for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he made the kingdom or nation swear that they could not find you.

Have you ever thought that your difficulty is the result of your sin or failure?
Sometimes that is true but often it is to stimulate growth.
Think through a current difficulty and surmise something that could be learned through it.

Possible Lesson #6 from the palace

God is perfectly able to protect His children anytime anywhere.

Possible Lesson #7 from the palace

Much of the troubles in our life are the result of our rebellion.

So often when trouble hits, we rush to find someone, anyone to blame besides ourselves. Elijah set the record straight and confronted Ahab. Always check our own heart first.

*"Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
'Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. Luke 6:41-42*

Ahab was pretty quick to blame Elijah for the troubles. We are often quick to blame others for our struggle. Current culture seeks to blame anyone and everyone else for my trouble. Few want to take personal responsibility for our own actions. This started way back with Adam "the woman YOU gave me." Ask God to bring to mind time when we were too quick to blame others without looking inward.

Possible Lesson #8 from the palace

God often calls on us to boldly confront evil and speak truth.

And he (Paul) was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. Acts 9:28

In Iconium they (disciples) entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands. Acts 14:1-3

But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 1 Peter 3:14-16

"And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:29-31

God does not always guarantee our physical safety as we carry out His mission. Many suffered persecution and even annihilation for their bold stand on the word.

Be sure that it is God directing the manner and substance of this confrontation.

Few enjoy confrontation. Sometimes it is necessary. The key to be sure God is directing it. Sometime He tells us to keep quiet and pray. Sometimes He directs us to go to them. Whichever it is we are to ALWAYS speak the truth in LOVE. Note some people claim to speak the truth but really don't love.

NEVER attempt to confront without first much prayer and clear direction from God not our feelings.