



Elijah Series #6 “Lessons from a Mountain Top”

Introduction

Observing God’s interaction with Elijah and Elijah’s spiritual journey in his day provides insight and principles for us in our day which has become similar to what Elijah fought in his day. The transitions in Elijah’s life follow a definite instruction from the Lord.

“And the word of the Lord came to Elijah”

Elijah’s general response to these direction was prompt obedience. There is much to learn from Elijah. So far, some key elements to Elijah’s life is his bold prayer, his listening ear, his prompt obedience, his contentment to serve wherever God put him.

- I. Lessons from the Palace where Elijah boldly announced God’s judgment for sin. 1 Kgs 17:1**
- II. Lessons from the brook where Elijah learned to trust God in obscurity and isolation. 1 Kgs 17:2-7**
- III. Lessons from Zarephath where Elijah learned to trust God in ministry 17:8-24**
- IV. Lessons from the Palace Part two where Elijah confronted Ahab again Kings 18:1-19**
- V. Lessons from Mount Carmel where Elijah confronted Baalism 18:20-40**

With one simple prayer, Elijah’s passion for revival was realized as God sent fire from heaven and the people proclaimed their allegiance to Yahweh (at least temporarily). Elijah and the people drove the prophets of Baal down the mountain and although some suggest they chucked them over a 1,400-foot precipice to the river bed below a later verse clearly indicates that they were killed with the sword. This would be in accordance with the instructions found in Deuteronomy 13 regarding false prophets who entice the people to serve any god but Yahweh.

Elijah demonstrated the boldness we later observe in John the Baptist standing up against evil. Scripture predicts that John would come in the “spirit of Elijah.” Elijah denounced not only Baalism but separatism between the tribes by restoring the broken and abandoned altar to Yahweh with TWELVE stones (one for each tribe).

One more thought about Elijah’s declaration that he was alone in his fight. It could be he wasn’t discounting the fact that there were still other prophets but at least at this particular encounter it was him against 450 prophets of Baal.

VI. Lessons from a Mountain Top where Elijah fervently prays 18:41-46

Prayer characterized Elijah’s life and ministry all along. James commented on Elijah’s prayer life.

The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit. James 5:16-18

Elijah struggled with all of the issues we struggle with in regard to life. Elijah’s prayer affected the world around him. Elijah prayed that it wouldn’t rain and it didn’t. Elijah payed attention to God’s direction as to where to go and what to do. Elijah asked God to raise the widow’s son from the dead and He did.

Elijah asked God to send fire down on the offering and He did.

A. Elijah predicted rain to Ahab 18:41-42

Now Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower." So Ahab went up to eat and drink.

This is a bold move for Elijah. He hasn't even prayed yet. It is obvious that he maintained a continual communication with God. In fact, God already informed Elijah He would send rain in verse one. Elijah previously informed Ahab that it would not rain again until HE said so. Now he said so. Elijah heard something no one else heard or saw. Elijah heard by faith the hand of God fulfilling His promise not only to Elijah but the draught stricken people. I don't know where Ahab was during the slaughter of Baal's prophets but Elijah told Ahab to go up and eat.

I am not sure the significance of the "go up and eat" thing. Some connect it to the sharing of the sacrificial meal.

Elijah attended a more important meeting with Yahweh. While Ahab feasted, Elijah fasted.

B. Elijah prayed for rain 18:41-44

But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees. He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go back" seven times. It came about at the seventh time, that he said, "Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea."

Tradition speculates the young servant was the widow's son. The text does not, but it is good sentiment.

Elijah crouched down to petition God to send rain. We don't know exactly what he said.

I surmise he turned God's promise into a prayer.

Even though God promised Elijah rain, he still petitioned God.

The crouching down demonstrated the intensity of his intercession. It is the same word used when Elijah prayed for the widow's son to live again.

After the petition, he instructed the servant to check on the answer.

The peak is a semi-isolated knoll with a cliff some forty feet high, looking south east.... The sea is invisible, except from the summit, and thus it was only by climbing to the top of Carmel, from the plateau where the altar may have stood, that the prophet's servant could have seen the little cloud, Spence-Jones, H.D.M. ed., 1909. 1 Kings, London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

He continued the intercession and kept checking for the answer seven times.

Seven often indicates the number of perfection or completion.

Finally, after the 7th try, the servant reported a distant cloud rising out of the sea.

That was enough for Elijah.

C. Elijah prepared Ahab for rain 18:44

And Elijah said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.'"

The servant would report to Ahab the necessity of cutting his meal short and hit the road to avoid the coming mud and flash flooding.

D. God provided rain 18:45

In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower.

Baal, the god of fire and raid could neither send fire or rain.

God sent lightning without clouds and rain in a drought.

Truly God demonstrated Himself to be the one true God.

E. Elijah and Ahab preceded the storm 18:46

And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel. 1 Kings 18:45-46

Ahab descended the twelve to twenty-five-mile trek down the mountain to the city of Jezreel (probably his summer residence).

The text informs us that “the hand of the Lord was on Elijah” apparently energizing him to keep pace ahead of Ahab’s chariot.

After a very long day of exhausting confrontation, Elijah now takes on a half or perhaps a full marathon.

It is estimated that a two-horse chariot could travel 25-30 miles an hour depending on terrain.

The max speed of a horse about 43mph.

The fastest runner was clocked at 28mph in the 100-yard dash.

The fastest Boston Marathon recorded calculates to average 12mph.

Elijah paced Ahab’s horses all the way to Jezreel.

We examined the passage, now let’s extract some possible timeless principles.

It is rather obvious that the focus of this section has to do with effective prayer.

Prayer occupies a gigantic space in the Bible.

It appears everywhere.

The Bible describes prayer on a number of different levels.

Prayer is a dependent child talking with his loving Father expressing admiration for His greatness, gratitude for His goodness, honest thoughts and emotions as well as humbly confessing the need for continual grace in his life and the lives of those for whom he cares.

We progress from nothing to a little cloud to a torrential rain and God’s hand on Elijah.

Possible timeless principle from the mountain top #1

God always does as promised

So expect God to fulfill His promises even before it happens.

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The Bible records a huge number of times where God does what He promised.

Yet Abraham did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. Romans 4:20-21

Here is a clear description of faith.

Being fully persuaded that God has the power to do what He promises.

Elijah continued to operate on the firm persuasion that just as God promised to stop the rain, He would return the rain as promised.

His spiritual senses picked up what others didn't.

He heard what others didn't hear.

Caution!

Be sure you are sure about the promise you claim.

Contrary to the little Sunday School song, every promise in the book is not ours.

You should be grateful for there are some frightening promises.

If in your communion with God, you have become persuaded of something God wants to do – expect Him to do it.

Remember however, the answer may not occur just when YOU want it.

Listen to some of Paul's persuasions.

For I am persuaded of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6

For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. 2 Timothy 1:12

Expect God to answer before it happens.

And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you. Mark 11:22-24

Sometimes God stirs a glimpse of an answer before it happens just as Elijah heard the rain before the rain.

Can you think of a time when you felt certain God was prompting you to pray and knew God was going to answer? Do you expect God to answer the petitions you ask of Him? Sometime our prayers are so general, we would have any idea if God answered them or not i.e. "God bless the missionaries." Take some time to wrestle with your attitude toward prayer. Be honest with God. I have had to wrestle with the temptation to not pray because I don't expect it will change anything. Sometimes prayer doesn't change "things" it changes me.

Possible timeless principle from the mountain top #2

*Even though God promises it, He wants us to pray for it.
So fervently pray for God's will.*

F.B. Meyer "God's promises are given, not to restrain, but to incite to prayer. They show the direction in which we may ask, and the extent to which we may expect an answer. They are the signed check which we must endorse and present for payment."

*This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
1 John 5:14*

Jesus promised answered prayer seven times in His final words before He was crucified. He told them to "pray in my name". That didn't just mean to tag "in Jesus name amen" at the end of our prayers. It had to do with praying according to His will and promise. Pray fervently for God's will just as Jesus prayed for God's will.

Possible timeless principle from the mountain top #3

*God's delays are not necessarily His denials
So pray persistently and fervently.*

Consider the promises of God as calls to prayer. Consider God's specific prompting as calls to prayer. God works through the prayers of His people.

*And he said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said,
"There is nothing."*

Oh those haunting words, "There is nothing." No sign of an answer. Nothing tangible to report. The psalmist agonized over the silent skies. Saints through the ages have agonized. The saints in revelation cry, "Lord how long? When heaven is silent, keep praying. Elijah said, "Go back" seven times. Why seven times? The earnest prayer. Perhaps the earnestness of the prophet increased at each report, "there is nothing." Perhaps there is significance in the seven times. Seven times happens many places in the Bible. Elisha instructed Naaman the leper to dip 7 times in the river. What if Elijah had stopped praying at 3 or 5 or 6? He persisted until he was sure of God's response. His persistence was due to his confidence in the promise of God.

*Ephes. 6:18-20 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,
Romans 12:12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,
Philip. 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

Listen to the words of Jesus.

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:1-8

The whole purpose of this parable was to show that...

“at all times they ought to pray and not lose heart.”

The sad thing is the lack of those who really trust Him. The other side of this is the fact that sometimes God does not just delay the answer but denies the answer to our prayers. James says it is sometime because we have wrong motives. Sometimes it is for our good and His will. Elijah can praise God He didn't answer his mid-depression prayer to die. Until God clearly tells us to stop – pray persistently and fervently.

Think over your prayer practice. Is your main passion YOUR will or GOD'S will? Is your petition to make your life easier and benefit you or benefit God's kingdom. "Your kingdom come YOUR will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus desperately wanted to escape the trauma of the cross but surrendered to God's will. Paul prayed the Colossians would be "filled" or saturated with the knowledge of God's will. When you pray "In Jesus name Amen" what do you mean? Think about the reality of praying in Jesus' name. Make sure your prayers are offered in accordance with Jesus agenda and will. Those are the prayers the Father promises to answer.

Following are the seven hard to assimilate prayer promises offered from the Upper Room teaching of Jesus.

John 14:13; 14:16; 15:7; 15:16; 16:23, 24; 16:26

Possible timeless principle from the mountain top #4

God acts in the world through the prayers of His people.

So make prayer a regular habit.

James drew this principle from the account of Elijah.

The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. James 5:16

It is clear that God will bring about His purposes.

"I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Job 42:2

also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:11-12

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11

James includes the balancing principle that there are things that do not come to pass for lack of prayer.

You do not have because you do not ask. James 4:2

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; Col. 4:2

Pray without ceasing; 1 Thes. 5:17

I don't understand it. All I know is that the prominence of prayer in the economy of God is unmistakable. Examples of God acting in connection with people praying fill the Bible and history. I still have much to learn and practice regarding prayer. I hope to spend the rest of this year to a deeper exploration AND practice of prayer. I do not want to preach it until I have sufficiently practiced it. I hope to share my experience after the New Year. You may hear bits and pieces along the way.

Is your first response to a problem to try to solve it on your own or pray about it? God tells us to pray about EVERYTHING. Do you expect to see changes do to your prayers? Evaluate your prayer habits. What things have possibly not happened because you have not prayed?

Possible timeless principle from the mountain top #5

Certain prayer postures enable deeper express of our heart

So engage whatever posture best communicates the passion of your heart.

The Bible records a myriad of physical prayer postures; sitting, standing, bowing, kneeling, laying prostrate, walking, dancing, raising hands, beating on the chest. Jesus Himself employed a number of postures in His prayer life

Check the attitude of your heart. What posture would best emulate that attitude. Try it.

Possible timeless principle from the mountain top #6

God is able to energize the weary.

So trust the Lord to renew your strength.

Even though Elijah must have been exhausted from ministry, God's hand was upon him.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary. Isaiah 40:28-31

The Gospel of Mark records one of the busiest ministry day's in the life of Jesus. He then tells us that when it was over, Jesus went up to the mountain to pray. He found refreshment from fatigue through prayer. Where do you go and what do you do to relax? We are physical beings and it is clear that sometime there is nothing that helps except physical rest. Elijah found that out a bit later in the middle of a depression.

I have struggled with this principle many times in my life. When I am struggling with fatigue and pray for energy without an obvious answer, I wonder what it all means. Sometimes God gave physical strength, sometime He didn't.

Here are some passages to consider further.

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Romans 15:1

For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; 2 Corinthians 1:8-9

and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might Ephesians 1:19

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Ephesians 6:10

Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:11