

# Portraits of a Prophet 9

11.12.23

## A MIGHTY BUT WEARY PROPHET

1 Kings 19:1–18 (CSB)

### **ELIJAH'S JOURNEY TO HOREB**

**19** Ahab told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. **2** So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "May the gods punish me and do so severely if I don't make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow!"

**3** Then Elijah became afraid and immediately ran for his life. When he came to Beer-sheba that belonged to Judah, he left his servant there, **4** but he went on a day's journey into the wilderness. He sat down under a broom tree and prayed that he might die. He said, "I have had enough! Lord, take my life, for I'm no better than my ancestors." **5** Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree.

Suddenly, an angel touched him. The angel told him, "Get up and eat."

**6** Then he looked, and there at his head was a loaf of bread baked over hot stones, and a jug of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again. **7** Then the angel of the Lord returned for a second time and touched him. He said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you." **8** So he got up, ate, and drank. Then on the strength from that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. **9** He entered a cave there and spent the night.

Suddenly, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

**10** He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of Armies, but the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are looking for me to take my life."

**11** Then he said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the Lord's presence."

At that moment, the Lord passed by. A great and mighty wind was tearing at the mountains and was shattering cliffs before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was a voice, a soft whisper.

<sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Suddenly, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

<sup>14</sup> "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of Armies," he replied, "but the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they're looking for me to take my life."

<sup>15</sup> Then the Lord said to him, "Go and return by the way you came to the Wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive, you are to anoint Hazael as king over Aram. <sup>16</sup> You are to anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel and Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. <sup>17</sup> Then Jehu will put to death whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death whoever escapes the sword of Jehu. <sup>18</sup> But I will leave seven thousand in Israel—every knee that has not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."

## 1. What does it feel like to win spiritual battles and engage in spiritual warfare?

- A. #1. Elijah felt Exhausted
- #2. Elijah felt Frustrated
- #3. Elijah felt Scared
- #4. Elijah felt Isolated
- #5. Elijah felt Disappointed
- #6. Elijah wanted to give up.

B. Thankfully, we do not serve a God who cannot handle us at our worst.

1. God knows how to tend to our exhaustion, our frustration, our fear, our isolation, and our disappointment.
2. His treatment is often different from what we would expect, but God knows how He created us and the effects of sin upon the human race.
3. God knows what we need and is faithful to provide for his people.

C. I do want to stress that Elijah was still the Lord's prophet.

1. Elijah was still mighty.
2. He was still called.
3. But he was weary.
4. What he needed, he could only receive from God.

## 2. The mighty but weary prophet received three things from God:

### A. Divine Peace/Rest

1. After Elijah vents and prays that he may die, he falls asleep.
  - a. The writer of Kings considers this a prayer.
  - b. Elijah communicated with God and toward God.
    1. He vented his pain, his desperation, and his disappointment.
    2. And as he pours this out toward God, it is called prayer.
  - c. Prayer is not you and I on our best behavior.
    1. Prayer is communication with God.
    2. If Elijah had taken these thoughts and feelings anywhere else, it would have been sin.
    3. But by taking it to God, Scripture calls it prayer.
  - d. The Psalms encourage us to pray at our best and worst.

1. We do not have to wait till we “calm down”.
2. We do not have to wait to pray.
3. Pray in the moment, pray in the desperation, pray with those words that are not yet formulated, pray with those raw emotions that God created and has Satan twisted.
4. PRAY!

2. Then Elijah sleeps.

a. Much like a tired child wears themselves out with crying, fits, and frustration, the next step is sleep.

b. Sometimes, what we need, is a good nap.

1. More importantly, you need to give yourself permission to “receive” the rest God has permitted you.

2. I didn’t say take a nap, for taking seems like we are stealing something.

3. But accepting rest as the blessing that God has provided.

a. Jesus said come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you “rest.”

b. Jesus interrupts the disciple’s ministry in Mark 6:31 and calls them to get away to a remote place and rest for a while.

c. Psalm 3:5 says, “I lie down and sleep; I wake again because the LORD sustains me.”

3. Twice in this passage, Elijah sleeps.

a. Sometimes, the first ministry God must give us is the ministry of peace and rest.

b. Elijah wasn’t ready for God’s presence yet.

- c. Elijah wasn't ready to receive another word from God.
- d. Elijah wasn't ready to go and pronounce the downfall of kings and the successors of God's power and authority.
- e. First, he needed rest.

## B. Elijah needed Divine Provision

### **1 Kings 19:5–8 (CSB)**

<sup>5</sup>Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree.

Suddenly, an angel touched him. The angel told him, "Get up and eat."

<sup>6</sup>Then he looked, and there at his head was a loaf of bread baked over hot stones, and a jug of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again. <sup>7</sup>Then the angel of the LORD returned for a second time and touched him. He said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you." <sup>8</sup>So he got up, ate, and drank. Then on the strength from that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.

1. This provision should have felt familiar to Elijah.
  - a. First, he received provisions from ravens.
  - b. Then, for three years, a widow provides for him.
  - c. And now, the Angel of the Lord prepares him food to eat and draws water for him to drink.
2. Again, **God met the physical needs of Elijah before He ministered to the spiritual.**
  - a. One of the reasons I'm thankful for this church and all that we do is that we are all committed to ministering to whole people.
  - b. A person with an empty belly has a harder time grasping the goodness of the Gospel.
  - c. A child whose birthday is celebrated is more open to the love of a heavenly father.

d. We believe that divine healing and miraculous provision often opens possibilities to share Jesus that our words, alone, cannot.

e. Jesus commended those servants who gave a drink of water to the least of these.

3. God does not ignore Elijah's physical needs.

a. Instead, God gives Elijah natural and supernatural provision.

b. Many of us in the room need God's provision.

1. We need a raise or for grocery prices to go down.

2. We need our cars to run efficiently and our tires to hold.

3. We also need the kind of provision that goes beyond budgeting and hard work.

4. We need God to divinely provide in ways that WE cannot.

4. Many of us need provision not only for the journey we see but for the journey that God has planned.

a. God fed Elijah twice.

b. The first feeding prepared Elijah for the day.

c. The second time prepared Elijah for the journey.

d. A verse I'm meditating on these days is **Jeremiah 12:5**"

<sup>5</sup> If you have raced with runners

and they have worn you out,

how can you compete with horses?

5. Elijah needed God's presence.

a. But before he has that life-changing encounter with God, there is a God-ordained journey he must experience first.

b. Notice what the Angel says:

### 3. A Divine Journey

<sup>7</sup>Then the angel of the LORD returned for a second time and touched him. He said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you." <sup>8</sup>So he got up, ate, and drank. Then on the strength from that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.

A. What happens next is pretty incredible.

1. The Divine rest and provision prepared Elijah for a journey.

a. The Rest and the Provision was not for Elijah's entertainment.

b. The rest and Provision were for Elijah's equipping.

2. It was not a 40-day journey from the wilderness to Mt. Horeb.

3. Elijah could have normally walked there in about ten days or so.

4. So what was God up to?

B. Forty is a meaningful number in the Bible.

1. "Forty" symbolizes struggle, discipline, waiting, and preparation for a new season.

a. Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted for 40 days BEFORE he was released into ministry.

b. Moses was 40 days and 40 nights at Sinai, receiving the Commandments and being prepared for his next season.

c. Israel was punished and disciplined for their unbelief for 40 years in the wilderness.

2. It is no accident that God takes Elijah on a 40-day journey.

a. **There is something in Elijah's life that needs attention BEFORE he is ready to hear from God and receive direction for the new season.**

b. 1 Kings doesn't tell us what happened in Elijah during this 40-day season.

c. And maybe that was the point:

1. After years of interceding, warring, and battling, maybe he needed a season where nothing of known significance happens.

2. What is evident is that this was not a season of comfort.

3. **Forty-day experiences NEVER happen at the resort but always in the wilderness.**

3. The wilderness has a shaping function.

a. We never leave wilderness seasons the same as we enter them.

b. Elijah was already a man of God.

1. He was already a prophet and that calling was not changing.

2. But what was before Elijah was different than what was behind him.

3. And the Elijah who entered the wilderness was not ready to hear what God was going to say at the Mountain.

C. As many of you are coming out of a "warring" season, you may feel discouraged as to why nothing seems to be happening.

1. Have you considered that God is working in you and around you to prepare you for the next season?

2. The in-between time is not a wasted time.



3. The journey in between is not an accident.

a. In between where you are and your future destination, there is unexpected beauty.

b. **The path God where God leads us is just as anointed and ordained as the destination.**

4. Moses needed the wilderness, David needed the wilderness, Elijah needed the wilderness, Jesus needed the wilderness, and we do too.

#### 4. The Cave: A new place for Elijah, a familiar place for God.

." <sup>8</sup> So he got up, ate, and drank. Then on the strength from that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>9</sup> He entered a cave there and spent the night. Suddenly, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

A. Mount Horeb was the mountain of God.

1. Sinai and Horeb are the same place.

a. But the word Horeb connects us to Deut. 5:2, which says, "At Horeb God made a covenant with us."

b. Horeb is a reminder of God's promises to Israel and Israel's promises to God.

2. When God asks Elijah, "Why are you here" the response from Elijah is, "I have been zealous for you, BUT YOUR PEOPLE have abandoned your Covenant.

a. Elijah is angry over the spiritual condition of Israel.

b. Now that Elijah is past the exhaustion and has had time to reflect in the wilderness, he is able to express more clearly what he feels is wrong.

c. Elijah is angry that the people are so sinful that they have torn down altars, killed the other prophets, and that they want to kill him too.

d. **Elijah wonders why his obedience and zeal have not been enough to turn the nation around.**

3. We know this is the root of Elijah's frustration because he repeats it again:

**1 Kings 19:10–14 (CSB)**

<sup>10</sup>He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of Armies, but the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are looking for me to take my life."

<sup>11</sup>Then he said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the LORD's presence."

At that moment, the LORD passed by. A great and mighty wind was tearing at the mountains and was shattering cliffs before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup>After the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was a voice, a soft whisper. <sup>13</sup>When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Suddenly, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

<sup>14</sup>"I have been very zealous for the LORD God of Armies," he replied, "but the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they're looking for me to take my life."

B. Some of you find yourself in this place.

1. You are angry, disappointed, and frustrated.
2. And when all the symptoms are dealt with, you realize that you are frustrated, angry, and disappointed because you believed that if YOU were obedient and zealous enough, everything would be different by now.

C. Our world is prone to this kind of frustration:

1. We celebrate the individuals that change the world.

2. We teach and encourage the idea that one good person, one strong person, and one hero is enough to radically change our worlds.

a. Sometimes that happens.

b. Sometimes, Elijah stands up and fires fall.

c. Sometimes, a John Hancock signs a document that changes history.

d. Sometimes, a Rosa Parks decides not to give up her seat on the bus.

3. And then, sometimes, we are very zealous and it seems that nothing happens.

4. And we, like Elijah, run from God, question God, and accuse God of not keeping His Word.

5. In those moments, God rarely explains Himself.

a. He didn't explain Himself to Moses,

b. He didn't defend Himself before Job,

c. He didn't give reasons to Elijah,

d. And God doesn't owe you and me an explanation either.

6. But what HE does do is bring us closer to Himself.

## 5. God reveals Himself.

1 Kings 19:11–13 (CSB)

<sup>11</sup>Then he said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the LORD's presence."

At that moment, the LORD passed by. A great and mighty wind was tearing at the mountains and was shattering cliffs before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup>After the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was a voice, a soft

whisper. <sup>13</sup>When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Suddenly, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

A. This is the same cave where God revealed himself to another prophet, Moses.

1. The Hebrew says that Elijah entered "The Cave," referring to the same cave where God hid Moses in the cleft of the rock so that His glory may pass by.

2. This was a place where God brought weary, burdened, and anointed men.

3. The Cave wasn't the place for answers; it was the place for encounter.

4. Too often, we seek answers when what we need is encounter.

5. What comes to mind is the image of a young child who has just gotten hurt.

a. The immediate reaction of a good parent is not to give a theological treatise or to explain the physics of why the child is hurting.

b. The response of a good parent is to bring the child in close.

c. You don't lecture someone who needs a hug.

B. As we read of God showing Himself to Elijah:

1. We would have expected God in the mighty wind.

2. Surely God is in the earthquake!

3. Surely, the fire walking by had to be the essence of God's presence.

C. But it was the soft whisper, the still small voice, where God revealed Himself.

1. The Hebrew is literally translated "a sound of sheer silence."

2. We have heard the phrase, "The silence is deafening."

a. In Minnesota, there is an anechoic room that absorbs 99.99% of all outside sounds.<sup>1</sup>

b. The longest any person has ever stayed there is 45 minutes, as the silence is so absolute that a person cannot function without sound.

c. I cannot imagine the effect of God speaking from the place of sheer silence.

3. The silence of the moment was no less holy or powerful than the mightiness of the wind, the earthquake, or the fire. Different, yes, but not less.

D. How often do we dismiss the Lord's ministry to us because it comes in ways we didn't expect?

1. The question should never be, "will God speak", but "how will God speak."

2. For all of us, God speaks through His written Word.

a. He may also speak through a believing friend, pastor, or fellow believer.

b. God does speak through dreams and visions, but they must align with Scripture.

3. Rarely does God take my advice on how I want Him to speak to me.

Apply: God knows how to minister to mighty but weary people.

A. Even when Elijah didn't know where he was running to, God knew.

1. God led Elijah, in a roundabout way, to the place where he had previously loved and encouraged His servant Moses.

2. For many in this room, God is leading you in a roundabout way to a place where He will encourage you, strengthen you, and recommission you for the next task ahead.

3. And in the process, you will encounter wilderness seasons that seem senseless and wasteful.

4. You will rest in caves when you dreamed of palaces.

5. And you will hear God's voice in that still, small way that has characterized His dealing with people since the beginning.

B. What do we do in light of this message:

1. Allow God to minister to your weariness, your anger, and your frustration.

2. Set aside time and space to encounter God.

3. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you hear and discern the Lord's voice to you in this season.

a. Some seasons, His voice is loud and clear.

b. Some seasons, His voice is soft and calm.

c. But He wants us to hear His voice.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://headsup.scoutlife.org/ask-us-anything-what-would-a-room-with-no-sound-be-like/#:~:text=But%20the%20lack%20of%20sound,lose%20the%20ability%20to%20function.>