

Zealous for the Lord

September 10, 2017

1st Kings 19:1-4

1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." 3 Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

The Bible, throughout all of its history, demonstrates the providence of God. That is God interacting in human destiny. First Kings reveals a conflict between the prophet Elijah who is a servant of God and queen Jezebel who serves the Canaanite (Phoenician) god Baal. The actual conflict is between the one true God and a false god.

The nature of the conflict goes back into history to the conquest of Canaan. The slaves were freed and led out of Egypt to Canaan by Moses with the help of God. The Bible shows God leading the people through God's servants. Then there's a conquest of Canaan where Joshua led the people with the help of God to conquer the various city states, politically independent communities, in Canaan. The 12 tribes settled in the land united together as one nation. Then they went through a period of leadership through the judges who were also helped by God. Then there was the monarchy with the Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. And then the kingdom divided with Israel to the north and Judah to the south.

In the Scripture Israel is a divided kingdom. Ahab is the seventh King of the northern kingdom Israel. Politically is a good king, he is good at foreign-policy, economics, and is at peace with Judah to the south. The problem is his wife. Queen Jezebel is a Phoenician (Canaanite). She worships Baal, the fertility god of the Canaanites. After she married the King she continued to worship Baal. Ahab joined her in worshipping Baal which goes against all mandated religious practices of Israel. The Bible tells us Ahab did more to displease God than any of the previous kings. He built a temple for Baal worship and promoted Baal worship throughout his sphere of influence. Jezebel used money from the treasury to pay for 950 prophets and ordered them to murder the Hebrew prophets. Elijah is one of the survivors.

The title is zealous for the Lord. Elijah has a very good history of being a zealous for the Lord. He is lucky to be alive. Most people in his position would stay hidden but not Elijah, he publicly challenge Jezebel's prophets. I would like to point out at this time that they were not actually prophets, they were actually hired hands. Again conflict is the God of Israel, the one true God, versus the god of Canaan, which is a fictional god. Eliza knows that God of Israel is the one true God. His plan is to prove it. So he challenges the higher powers to a demonstration. The challenge is to send a fire for sacrifice offering. They could not do it; they could not send fire down to consume the offering. However, Elijah built an altar, sacrificed a bull, and prayed to God. A fire consumed the sacrifice and the people acknowledged the God of Israel is the one true God. Elijah then put the prophets Baal to death. So Jezebel sets out to kill Elijah. Up to this point Elijah is very bold, powerful, and is zealous for the Lord.

Today's Scripture shows a different characteristic of Elijah, a more human characteristic. Ahab tells Jezebel that Eliza killed all the prophets (actually false prophets). So Jezebel swears to kill Elijah. At this point we see a sudden change in the

personality of Elijah from fearless, bold, powerful, and zealous to someone that is suddenly afraid and runs for his life. Why did he change?

There are five personalities in the Scripture; King Ahab, Queen Jezebel, the queen's prophets, the prophet Elijah, and God. King Ahab should be devoted to God. However, he embraced the foreign god Baal. Queen Jezebel should have converted from the false god of her people to the one true God but instead she influences the king. The queen's prophets, which are not true prophets. Personally I don't think they should even be called prophets because they are actually hired hands employed into the queen's service. Elijah lives an up and down life from the highest of highs to the lowest of lows. He has witnessed the power of God on both a personal level and a national level.

Chapter 19 shows the human nature of Elijah. We see a change in Elijah to a period of depression & confusion. This reveals to us that even great people go through periods of self doubt. His experience is a common human experience, and emotional experience. Depression is a normal reaction to grief, or stress, or frustration, or illness. But Elijah is in a state of misery. When Ahab returns home Jezebel is waiting for news of victory. But Ahab tells her that Elijah won and killed all of her hired prophets. Jezebel is furious and is bent on vengeance. There is a big difference between Ahab's experience and Jezebel's. When Ahab returns he returns as a witness to the power of God. Yet he refuses to acknowledge that the credit for the victory goes to God. He gives all of the glory to Elijah instead of God. So, Jezebel thinks, in human and worldly terms, that she can just eliminate Elijah.

Instead of standing bold and fearless like he did before this (stood up to Ahab and the prophets of Baal) Elijah tucks tail and runs away. He leaves Israel and goes south to Judah where he is out of the reach of the queen. At this point in his life Elijah is not trusting God. His behavior is now human, irrational, and illogical. Elijah has reached his emotional and spiritual bottom. He is so despondent that he asks God to take his life. I don't think he really wants this because he could have just stayed in Israel and Jezebel would have done that. He is now cut off from those that are close to him. As a result he feels all alone. His problem is a common human characteristic, it is his focus. He is focused on his circumstances instead of being focused on God.

What does that have to do with me? What does that have to do with us? Earlier I asked the question "Why did he change?" The Elijah that is zealous for the Lord trusts the divine. He trusts the power of the God of creation whom provides inner wisdom. Elijah trusts in that power and inner wisdom. A key word here is trust which can be synonymous with faith. That is the kind of faith that can move mountains. The kind of faith that has no fear and no doubt. This kind of faith allows you to trust in yourself. As you think, so shall you be, your thoughts create your reality. I will repeat this for emphasis. As you think, so shall you be, your thoughts create your reality. Elijah changed, his personality changed, and his results changed. This is all because his perception changed. The result of this is that his reality changed. His thought process created his reality.

The Elijah that is zealous for the Lord was fighting for the Lord. His focus was on the Lord. The Elijah that runs and hides in fear was focused on the self. Whenever there is a smidgen of doubt that is what you focus on. His fear comes from a self focus instead of a divine focus. As a Christian you live in the world as a divine being because the Spirit is within you. The spiritual characteristics go against the physical domain and into the

spiritual realm. This gives you trust in your higher sense of self to a divine capacity that extends beyond your troubles. It is a God force.

The God force transcends the ego and the doubt that holds you back. The God force embraces divine intelligence which is universal. It manifests abundance, intelligence, joy, peace, and power. Then you get to embrace the power of God and live in a divine state.

When you have reached a divine state of being. Then you see the world differently from everybody else, and from your past self. It is a new level of trust that sees the unfolding of God. You reach a level where see everybody and everything as divinely inspired. You don't see people as objects, shapes, color, gender, occupation, or social status. You see the unfolding of God in all things and in all people. You trust in the one that created you. You understand that there is a force that is greater than you and more powerful than you and it is totally different from the ego. This divine force is in the universe; it is everywhere. It is in you; manifested within you. It is free, always available, and never dies.

All our lives we wanted to be a certain somebody. Finally you, as your divine self, realize that person you wanted to be is not who you are. You thought the person you are is a person of wants. You wanted to be the best seller, top dog, famous, rich, star, athlete, employee of the year. Now you know you have to trust in something else, something much better, more powerful and everlasting. You, like Elijah, are weak when you focus on the self but strong, powerful, and when you are zealous for the Lord.