

## Lesson 5      1 September 2013

### Elijah at Mount Horeb

#### Lesson Scope: [1 Kings 19](#)

#### Lesson Focus

The stage was set for a major revival in Israel. God had answered Elijah by fire on Mount Carmel, and Elijah had purged Israel of the false prophets. Elijah likely thought this situation would provide the needed momentum for a mass return to God that even Ahab and Jezebel would need to acknowledge.

Jezebel, stung by Elijah's accurate, public portrayal of Baal, was not inclined to change. She swore by her gods to bring vengeance upon Elijah within twenty-four hours.

Consequently, Elijah believed it prudent to flee for his life. He traveled south through Beersheba and into the wilderness. There he lapsed into such a feeling of uselessness and weariness that he wished for God to take away his life.

To a greater or lesser degree we all experience difficulties, reverses, or adverse circumstances. These are a normal part of life. How we view and relate to these experiences has a lot to do with our spiritual health and prosperity.

We do not criticize those who are facing trials or difficulties. Temptation to discouragement because of difficulty is the work of the enemy. We know it is not wrong to be tempted. But to succumb to discouragement or despair finally hinders one's relationship with God. Keep a positive emphasis. No one needs to be overcome by discouragement instead we need to emphasise God's many promises to His children. As we claim them, we will be victorious.

The enemy excels at bringing discouragement to one who has just experienced victory. Discouragement obscures one's view of God and hinders his usefulness.

**Lesson Aim:** To understand the nature of and the remedy for discouragement.

**Theme Verse:** [Isaiah 35:4](#). Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you.

## Lesson Text

### "He ... Went for His Life"

[1 Kings 19:1-4](#) <sup>1</sup> And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> 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 tomorrow about this time. <sup>3</sup> And when he saw *that*, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which *belongeth* to Judah, and left his servant there. <sup>4</sup> 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.

### "What Doest Thou Here?"

[1 Kings 19:5-14](#) <sup>5</sup> And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise *and* eat. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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? <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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: <sup>12</sup> And after the earthquake a fire; *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. <sup>13</sup> 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? <sup>14</sup> 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.

### **"Go, Return on Thy Way"**

**1 Kings 19:15-18** <sup>15</sup> 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: <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **"He ... Went for His Life"**

1. Why did Elijah fear for his life?
2. List some circumstances that could cause us to fear.

#### **"What Doest Thou Here?"**

3. What provisions that would help him in his journey did God make for Elijah?
4. What benefits may one who is discouraged derive from the question "What doest thou here?"
5. What is significant in the fact that God was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but that He spoke in a still, small voice?

#### **"Go, Return on Thy Way"**

6. How might the Lord's command to Elijah have helped him through his discouragement?
7. How can we receive help in times of discouragement?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

"Ahab told Jezebel all" (2 Kings 19:1); and we can be sure that the weak king, foreseeing her fury, neither challenged her nor offered any defense of the true God and His prophet.

When Elijah saw Jezebel's determination against truth, he arose and fled, apparently motivated by the fear of man (2 Kings 19:3). It seems he failed

to consider that the God who had hidden him from Ahab for the past three-and-one-half years would certainly not allow him to perish now at Jezebel's hand.

The juniper tree (2 Kings 19:4-5) was a nearly leafless, many-branched plant. It offered little shade from the rays of the sun.

"I am not better than my fathers" (2 Kings 19:4) indicates what was discouraging Elijah. The faithful in the Northern Kingdom had been living under persecution.

Verse 8 indicates that Elijah traveled "unto Horeb, the mount of God." God provided two meals (2 Kings 19:6-8), which gave Elijah strength to travel to this place where Israel had received the Law. Here once before, God had spoken directly to men. That time His presence had been manifested through fire and the quaking of the mountain. This time He was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire (2 Kings 19:11-12); but He spoke through a still, small voice.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **"He ... Went for His Life"**

1. Discouragement threatens when our efforts to promote truth seem to fail (2 Kings 19:1-2). We faithfully serve the Lord by consistent living and by faithfully spreading the Word. Then we leave the results with the Lord. As the Word is shared, the Holy Spirit works. "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). Seeing no visible results from our efforts does not necessarily indicate personal failure. We are responsible for promoting truth, not for producing results. Let us remember that many enter the wide gate and travel the broad way, but few find the strait gate and the narrow way (Matthew 7:13-14).

2. Discouragement can be induced by personal threats and accusations (2 Kings 19:2-3). If these come to us, we do well to commit the keeping of our souls to Christ, who is our example in suffering (1 Peter 4:12-19). The Lord does not allow anything in our experience that He does not provide grace for us to overcome.

3. Discouragement threatens when we are alone in our difficulties (2 Kings 19:3-4). When we feel such discouragement, we need to bring the matter to the Lord in prayer. Sharing with a faithful brother or sister also helps. The Lord has given us the faithful brotherhood to encourage us in a day of much sin and unfaithfulness.

### **"What Doest Thou Here?"**

4. Discouragement threatens when we are physically worn down (2 Kings

19:5). In such a situation, we may need physical rest. But more importantly, we need to rest in the Lord as we commit our way to Him. God's strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

5. Discouragement blinds us to our need of God's miraculous provisions (2 Kings 19:6-7). We tend to overestimate our problems and to look within ourselves for answers. Unchecked, discouragement will starve us to death spiritually, even while heaven-sent nourishment is placed within our reach.

6. Discouragement diminishes our usefulness (2 Kings 19:8-9). When Elijah fled from Jezebel, he was going farther and farther from God's people and the work God had for him. If we distance ourselves from God and His people, we cannot expect to be victorious over discouragement. Nor will we be on hand to give others a word of encouragement, to lend a helping hand, or to take up the call of the Lord.

7. Discouragement fosters a self-centered outlook (2 Kings 19:10-14). Focusing on the negative is not a realistic approach to life. We should not focus on the failures of others. In fact, dwelling unwholesomely on our own failures is often a result of pride, and it only deepens discouragement. We must confess what requires confession and move forward in the blessing of forgiveness and in the power of our omnipotent God.

8. We overcome discouragement as we allow God to wean us from the bondage of our misperceptions (2 Kings 19:11-13). Personal and collective worship clear one's clouded vision of himself and others. Viewing God's power and His workings in our day encourages us to faithfulness.

### **"Go, Return on Thy Way"**

9. We overcome discouragement as we become actively involved in God's plan (2 Kings 9:15-16). Elijah could begin to view God's remedy for the situation in Israel as he anointed those who would be able to help the situation. Likewise, instead of lamenting or complaining about needs in the church, we should be doing all we can to promote truth. This calls for being examples of the believers and for contributing however we can to the work of the church. There are children to teach, youth to inspire, busy parents and church leaders to assist, sick and elderly saints to visit, and lost souls to witness to. The church needs writers, Sunday school teachers, and plenty of inspired and zealous students of the Word.

10. We overcome discouragement as we are willing to identify with the faithful remnant (2 Kings 19:18). Loyalty to church standards and to the direction of church leaders brings a sense of fulfillment. What could be more rewarding than traveling through this world as a clearly identified child of our heavenly Father? When we express such loyalty, we are in-

volved in a cause which is greater than ourselves and which will ultimately triumph. May we each give of our best to that cause.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Discouragement threatens when our efforts to promote truth seem to fail (19:1-2).
2. Discouragement can be induced by personal threats and accusations (19:2-3)
3. Discouragement threatens when we feel alone in our difficulties (19:3-4).
4. Discouragement threatens when we are physically worn down (19:5).
5. Discouragement blinds us to our need of God's miraculous provisions (19:6-7).
6. Discouragement diminishes our usefulness (19:8-9).
7. Discouragement fosters a self-centered outlook (19:10-14).
8. We overcome discouragement as we allow God to wean us from the bondage of our misperceptions (19:11-13).
9. We overcome discouragement as we become actively involved in God's plan (19:15-16).
10. We overcome discouragement as we are willing to identify with the faithful remnant (19:18).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. Why did Elijah fear for his life?

Elijah was familiar with Jezebel's influence in Israel at this time. Her threat was consistent with her character.

2. List some circumstances that could cause us to fear.

These include financial reverses, health issues of ourselves or loved ones, the moral and spiritual decadence of our day, and threats to our religious freedom.

3. What provisions that would help him in his journey did God make for Elijah?

God gave Elijah time to rest physically. He provided food to strengthen him for his journey.

4. What benefits may one who is discouraged derive from the question "What doest thou here?"

This question helps a person to evaluate his own thoughts, feelings, and motives. It helps one to stop and consider God's provisions. It helps one to gain a fresh perspective of life and to evaluate whether his life is useful in

the Lord's work.

5. What is significant in the fact that God was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but that He spoke in a still, small voice?

We tend to be impressed with the phenomenal. It is not wrong to marvel at great manifestations of God. But there is nothing to replace the Word and the Spirit in speaking to our hearts. Personal and collective worship are very important factors in helping us through times of discouragement. Perhaps God wanted to impress Elijah (and us) with the fact that the spectacular (such as the Mount Carmel event) is not the norm and that we should be alert to God's more frequent movements.

6. How might the Lord's command to Elijah have helped him through his discouragement?

Elijah could see that God's plan was going forward; God had not been defeated. Elijah was able to do something for God in this time of discouragement.

7. How can we receive help in times of discouragement?

Becoming actively involved in the Lord's work helps us to set our focus on something far greater than ourselves and our disappointments. A faithful brotherhood provides inspiration and encouragement when we face special trials. We can claim the promises of God.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

All faithful servants of God at times face temptation to discouragement. It is not wrong to be tempted, but it becomes wrong and spiritually debilitating to remain discouraged.

May we always keep in view God's provisions for His people, so that we are not overcome by discouragement. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

### **Research Guide**

1. A character study of Jezebel may help one understand Elijah's mortal fear.
2. Consider similarities between Elijah's discouragement and Jonah's response to Nineveh's repentance.