***Job and Elijah

RV124-01***

We are studying the fifth seal. This is segment number 6 in Revelation 6:9-11. The apostle John has observed in heaven a group of martyrs which have been killed during the tribulation period because of their proclamation of God's Word, and because they've exposed the moral evil of their day. Those martyrs he hears crying out in verse 10, "How long, O, Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Them that dwell on the earth are these unbelievers. Their plaintive cry, "O Lord, how long?" is a cry which has often then over the centuries on the lips of believers who, while being as right as rain, are treated as deluded fools lacking in compassion and discernment. As we have observed, the Bible records several heroes of faith who found that God is neither asleep nor indifferent to their plight, and who have had occasion to cry out, "O, Lord, how long?" We've already looked at the splendid example of Joseph, the son of Jacob, who suffered enormous abuse, and enormous personal degradation, and yet whom God wonderfully vindicated.

**Job**

We now direct your attention to another such hero – one that all of us highly esteemed and admire, even though he himself had certain weaknesses. That is the man Job. This was a man who indeed was characterized as a godly person. The Bible tells us right off the bat, in Job 1:1, that Joe respected God; that he shunned the evil which was surrounding him; and, that he did live in a very evil society. But he was aware of the fact that he was a child of God, and that there was a standard by which he was called to live, which prevented him from accepting the standards that surrounded him.

**Job was a Good Man**

Job 1:1 says, "There was a man in the Land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was perfect;" that is, he was spiritually mature and upright; one that feared God and that shunned the evil. This man not only was a believer, and he not only respected God, but he also made it a point to avoid evil. He took all the steps necessary to avoid the corrosive influence of evil upon his mind and upon his life. He just did not permit evil to come in through his senses. He did not expose himself to that destructive effect. Job knew a lot of Bible doctrine. That is evident as you read through this book, which probably is the oldest book in the Old Testament. It has an enormous amount of Bible doctrine truth in it, and Job functioned upon it. Because of Job's godliness, and because he was related to the commandments of God in a positive way, he was also in a position where God could bless him.

**Job was a Wealthy Man**

So, verses 2 and 3 tell us about the great blessing and prosperity that God showered upon this man:" There were born into him seven sons and three daughters." He had a family of ten children: seven boys; and, three girls. His substance (his material wealth) also was 7,000 sheep, and 3,000 camels, and 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and a very great household, so that this man was the greatest of all men of the East." That's very refreshing. Here was a godly born-again person (an enormously wealthy person) who has a large family, and is a man who stands in great esteem among his compatriots in spite of the fact that they are pagans by and large.

**Job was a Priestly Man**

Furthermore, he took his role as the head of the family very faithfully. That this was the era in human history when the father of the family was the priest who interceded in behalf of the family to God directly. And Job was a faithful man in relationship to his priestly duties, and he took potential sin seriously. He took the fact that his kids might be guilty of evil as a very serious matter that he had to deal with before God to seek atonement for them as the family priest.

So, in Job 1:4-5, we read about his piety: "And his sons went and feasted in their houses, everyone his day, and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and drink with them." There were seven sons, and there were seven days in the week, and they ran a party each day. And they ran it in different homes. You could tell what day of the week it was by who was running the party that day. They would invite their sisters to join them at these various convivial occasions.

Verse 5 says, "And it was when the days of their feasting were finished, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus did Job continually." Job says, "In the process of having the party, things might have gotten out of hand. They might, in the very process of their enjoying God's abundance, brought sin into the picture, and have become guilty of some evil." That is what often happens when we enjoy God's prosperity. So, he said, as their priest, "I'm covering them." And he went to God, making appropriate sacrifices for their atonement.

Into this picture comes Satan, who challenges, before God, Job's dedication to God, and Job' dedication to divine viewpoint principles. The upshot of what Satan says is, "Sure he's very faithful to you. Sure he's dedicated to you. Look at what a good life you give him! Look at how you have prospered him and how you blessed him! He's smart. Why shouldn't he subscribe to you as the God that he worships and honors in such a detail of faithfulness?"

Job 1:9: "Then Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Does Job fear for nothing? Haven't you made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.'" Satan said, "Of course, he's faithful to you. You have not only prospered him, but you have even built a hedge around this man. If I wanted to get at him to bring him some misery, I can't, because you have built a hedge around him," which is, of course, what God does. When you and I are godly people, when we are obedient to the Word of God, there is a hedge about us, and the protective hand of God is upon us. When that hedge is broken through, we must, in all integrity, ask why God may have His reasons, as he did with Joe, to be using us to demonstrate the glory of God through some suffering that we go through. Or it may be that we have been guilty of an evil such that God's hedge now has a weak point in it through which Satan can come.

But Satan says, "You hedged this man in. Nobody can get at him. Put forth Your hand now, and touch all he has, and he will curse You to Your face." So, Satan says, "You take it all away from him, and you'll see how faithful he is to you." So, Satan was slandering this godly man, Job. And God said, "Well, let's see how right you are." And He allows Satan to come through the hedge, and to remove Job's material prosperity, and even more painfully, to remove his ten children.

So, in Job 1:13-19, you have this terrible list of one tragedy after another that is reported to him by his servants of the destruction of his material possessions, and ultimately the destruction and death of his children. What is his response?

Beginning at Job 1:20, Job's response to this undeserved suffering is to worship God, and to declare his confidence in the justice of God: "Then Job arose and tore his mantle, and shaved his head (oriental expressions of grief), and fell down upon the ground and worshipped. He said, "I came naked out of my mother's room, and I shall return there naked. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Now that is nobility. That is godly nobility in the highest sense.

Verse 22: "In all this, Job did not sin, nor charged God with folly." Job did know what was going on. He did not understand. As he thought this over in his mind, he could not think of any reason that the hedge should have been removed about him, or that he deserved this kind of treatment. He was confident, however, that God was justice. He knew about the essence of God. He knew that God is always fair. Whatever is the reason for this, God is not mistreating him.

So, Job's says, relative to all that he had: "I never had it when I was born. I came into this world with nothing, and I'll leave it with nothing. It'll all be left behind. What I have is because God has given it to me. God is to be blessed, and I bless Him now, when He has decided, for whatever reason, to take it away from me."

So, Satan lost the first round. And he dismisses Job's steadfast loyalty to God on the basis that Job has not personally, physically suffered anything. So, in Job 2:4, we read, "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, 'Skin for skin. Yea, all that a man has, he will give for his life.' What Satan is saying is that: "He can give up his material things. He can even give up the lives of his children. But you bring that painful suffering where he lives with it physically (where he's conscious of it 24 hours a day) and you'll see what he'll do."

So, God says, "OK, I'll remove the hedge one step more. You can hit him physically, but you can't kill him." So, God permitted Job to be infected by Satan with painful sores – perhaps boils. Verses 7 and 8: "So, Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown;" that is, there were boils from under the soles of his feet that he walked down to the top of his head: "And he took a potsherd with which to scrape them, and he sat down among the ashes." Job gets a broken piece of a pot, and he sits there scratching those boils to try to reduce the pain.

**Job's Wife**

Well, about this time, Mrs. Job has had enough of all this, and she comes in with some marvelous advice to encourage and to comfort her husband, and to help him through this particular time of trial that he is now suffering. So, she comes in verse 9, and we read, "Then said his wife unto him, "Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God and die." She said, "Are you still going to go on and be the faithful Job, standing by God, spouting off about the justice of God, and knowing how fair He is, and making these dramatic statements (these inspirational statements) like you are some kind of a Patrick Henry: 'Naked I came into the world; and, naked I shall leave the world?' Just tell God where to head in, and let Him kill you – finish it off."

Now, that is a real low blow to a man that is in a state of sorrow to begin with, and in the state of physical agony and pain that Job is in. He is vulnerable. Job 2:10 gives his response: "But he said unto her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' In all this, Job did not sin with his lips." What a tremendous testimony. His response was that God has given us good things. Whatever reason that he's bringing evil things, He's still the same fair, loving God. But you can just hear in the background, as Job sits there scratching himself on that pile of ashes, "O Lord, how long?" Here is a godly man getting what he doesn't deserve.

**Job's Three Friends**

Well, he had three friends who decided to come to comfort him, and we read about them in Job 2:11-13. It says, "They came. They wept with him. They expressed their sorrow. And they sat around on the ground seven days and seven nights. Nobody spoke because they saw how great suffering and grief was, and they just sat there with him. Then they began conversing. The upshot of it was that they suggested that Job was suffering because of some evil in his life. Job 4:7: "Remember, I pray you, whoever perished being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they the plow iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same."

Now, here is this poor godly man sitting there in all of his agonies, and here is one of his buddies who has come to comfort him, visiting him here in his hospital ash heap. And what do they do? They say, "You did something evil, and that's why God is doing it. Anybody knows that a person who does right does not get this kind of treatment." They were some friends (some comforters).

Well, they carry on with this thing, and in Job 8:4-6, they hit them again: "If your children have sinned against Him, and He has cast them away for their transgression, if you would seek unto the Lord early, and make your supplication to the Almighty; if you were pure and upright, surely now he would awake for you, and make the habitation of your righteousness prosperous." They said, "If you were all upright and as pure as you're saying, God would now bring relief to you." So, they sock it to him again.

But Job, as you read the book through the agonies of searching his heart, and feeling sorry for himself – he did slip into that. It got to be very overpowering. The "O, Lord, how long?" got to be the plaintive cry of a little bit of self-pity. But ultimately, we find that Job made no pretense about the fact that he was indeed a sinful person. At the very end of the book, in Job 42:6, we read, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and I repent in dust and ashes." Job said, "I know I'm not perfect. And if God will show me where I have sinned, I won't make any pretenses. I'm not going to go around and say, 'No, that was alright to do. No, I'm stubbornly going to refuse to admit it.'" Job said, "I'll admit it very readily. My confession will be there immediately." And again, after his friends get through doing a hatchet-job on him, you can hear him echoing so plaintively again, "Oh Lord, how long?"

Well, as always, the God of justice brings vindication to those who suffer unjustly, even as He will to those tribulation saints in the future. And what God does is that He rebukes Job's friend for assuming that his man was suffering for some evil. In Job 42:7, we read, "And it was that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My wrath is kindled against you, and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right as My servant Job has. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up yourselves for a burnt offering. And My servant job shall pray for you. For him, I will accept, lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, like My servant Job. So, Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did accordingly as the Lord commanded them, and the Lord also accepted Job.'"

Now the Lord condemns his three friends and says, "You are all off-base. You are out of line to be attacking this man and saying, 'God is doing this to you because of some evil. Now fess up. What is it? Get it straightened out.' The reason was that I was demonstrating My glory through this man's godliness, and you were trying to intimidate him." Now God says, "You better get yourselves this offering of sacrifice, and go to Job, and ask him to make it in your behalf, or I'm going to bring my wrath down upon you."

Joe is vindicated, as you and I will be when we stand by that which is the truth, no matter who else wants to stand by. When you, as a young person, stand by God's moral code, no matter how vile and filthy and dirty everybody else around you is, the time will come (you may count on it), that God will vindicate, prosper, and bless you while the rest of them go out into an eternity of nothing and have a life that is a zero.

**God Doubled Job's Prosperity**

Then God turned back to his man Job to further vindicate him. He restored him to good health, and He gave him double the amount of his prosperity. Job 42:10: "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. Also, the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. And there came to him all his brethren and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with them in his house. They bemoaned him and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. Every man gave him a piece of money, and everyone an earring of gold." So, all of his friends and family now came, happy that he was on the mend again, and that he was well, and they were still commiserating with him over the hard time that he had been through.

Verse 12 says, "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning, for he had," and then it lists his material wealth. If you will match that up against what we started off with in chapter 1 listing how many sheep and camels and oxen and donkeys he had, you will discover that the figure is exactly twice. God gave him twice the amount of material wealth that he had before to demonstrate (to vindicate) this man who cried out, "O Lord, how long?"

**God Doubled Job's Children**

Verse 13 says, "He also had seven sons and three daughters." And you might wonder why he did not end up with 14 sons and six daughters. He did not (undoubtedly to the relief of Mrs. Job), but the truth of the matter is that he did have twice as many. This is a tremendously interesting observation in Scripture – that as it goes down, naming double of all the material wealth, it gets to the children, and God says, "I'm going to prosper you twice with everything." Then he has the same number: seven sons; and, three daughters. Why? Simply because he hadn't lost the first set. They were all in heaven. He still had seven sons up there, and he still had three daughters. He indeed ended up with double the number of children.

"O, Lord, how long?" God hears, and He vindicates.

Joe joins that noble company of examples of vindicated believers with Joseph.

**Elijah**

Another one I would direct your attention to is the hero Elijah. Elijah was one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, and one of the great voices to the northern kingdom of Israel, who lived at a time in history when Israel had degenerated to a low point under the leadership of King Ahab and his infamous wife Jezebel. It is this Elijah who was sent by God to have a confrontation with the wicked King Ahab to announce to him that there would be several years of no rain upon the land. If you've ever traveled in Israel, you'll know what that means – to have no rain in that kind of territory and that kind of desert-like situation is devastating.

So, in 1 Kings 17:1, we read, "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, 'As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to My Word.'" Elijah just stands up and says, "There's not going to be any rain again until I say so." In the meantime, God feeds Elijah during three years of drought in Israel, with the ravens who brought him food, and with the widow of Zarephath and the meal that she had.

In 1 Kings 17:24, we read about Elijah doing the very great good, and the very great kindness of raising the widow's dead son, which confirmed that he was God's servant speaking God's Truth: "And the woman said to Elijah, 'Now by this (the raising of her son from the dead), I know that you are a man of God, and that the Word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.'" So, Elijah was confirmed as being indeed a man who spoke for God – a true prophet. God sent him to have a confrontation now with the powerful ruler Ahab. Ahab hated Elijah with a vengeance, and he considered him a troublemaker.

In 1 Kings 18:16, we read, "So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass that when Ahab saw Elijah that Ahab said unto him, 'Are you he that troubles Israel?'" Now, this is really a joke. You can almost hear Elijah saying, "O Lord, how long?" Here is Jezebel and Ahab. Jezebel is bringing her phallic cult sex worship of Baalim into the nation of Israel, and Ahab is prospering it and providing them with places of worship. And the people are being corrupted. And here, bringing down upon them God's judgment of the drought, Ahab calls Elijah the troublemaker.

Well, Elijah boldly turns the accusation around to the king. 1 King's 18:18: "And he (Elijah) answered, 'I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and has followed Baalim.'" So, Elijah shoves it right back in the king's teeth and says, "Don't call me a troublemaker. I'm not the cause of the troubles in this country. You're the cause of the trouble. You have turned from God's commandments. You have turned from God. You've closed off God's blessings upon this nation."

Well, Elijah boldly proceeds to set up a confrontation with the prophets of Baal, the phallic cult which has been sponsored by Jezebel. In 1 King's 18:19, we read, "Now, therefore, send and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 prophets of the idols who eat at Jezebel's table." Elijah calls upon the Jewish people to gather at a confrontation between the prophets of Baal and himself as a representative of God, in order to demonstrate, in some dramatic way, who indeed is the true and living God, and whom they should be following.

Because the leaders had gone astray spiritually, the people were now astray spiritually. They weren't clear. They weren't sure where the real God was to be found. This is as we have in our country today. The preachers have gone astray spiritually. They have deviated from the confidence of the inerrancy of Scripture and the proclaiming of the Word of God. So, we have a population now that is uncertain about what God thinks, and about what God wants them to do. Therefore, evil is tolerated in the land, and God's hand of blessing is increasingly being restricted upon us.

So it was upon Israel of old. But Elijah calls for a confrontation, and for the people to make the decision first. 1 Kings 18:21: "Elijah came unto all the people and said, 'How long are you going to struggle with the two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.' And the people answered him not a word." They just stood there in sullen silence.

Well, Elijah confidently challenges the Baal prophets to this public test of the true God. In 1 King's 18:22, we read, "And then Elijah said unto the people, 'I, even I only, remain the prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks, and let them choose one bullock for themselves; cut it in pieces; lay it on wood; and, put no fire under it. And I will prepare the other bullock; lay it on wood; and, put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord. And the God who answers by fire, let Him be God.' And all the people answered and said, 'It is well spoken.'" Everybody said, "That is a good test."

So, the test was set up between the prophets of Baal and Elijah. And, as you know, verses 25 through 39 describe how it was a total victory for Elijah. The prophets of Baal were simply devastated. They carried on, and carried on for hour after hour, calling upon Baal to light the fire. Nothing happened. They resorted to letting their own blood by carving themselves up. Still there was no response. Elijah (who had never been to seminary where they taught him public relations) stood on the sideline taunting them; ridiculing them; and, telling them that maybe their God was asleep, and they should call louder and wake him up. And maybe their God was (as the King James puts it euphemistically) "away on a trip." But in the Hebrew, it indicates that he's sitting out there on the pot. He says, "Maybe you need to call him a little louder." I mean, he really got insulting about their god. I mean this was really humiliating, and those guys were sitting there listening to this jerk out there taunting them; they're getting more frenzied; and, nothing is happening.

Then when it comes his turn, he soaks that offering; he soaks it; and, he soaks it. He had a ditch built around it, so it had water in it. And when he called on God, boy, that fire came down and zapped that offering, and licked up the water in the ditch. And Elijah stood there vindicated. God had answered, "How long?" But in that very act, he knew that he was operating on the Word of God.

But in that very act, he brought down upon himself the rage of Jezebel. In 1 Kings 18:36, we read, "And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, 'Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word.'" What Elijah was saying was, "God, vindicate me. Vindicate me now." And, of course, He did.

Under the Mosaic Law, the prophets of Baal were condemned. So, when the victory had been demonstrated to Elijah that he was the representative of the real God, verse 20 tells us that he commanded that the prophets of Baal not escape, and that the people should kill every one of them, which they did. Now, that brought down the wrath of Jezebel upon him.

Elijah gave the finishing thought to his testimony before announcing the end of the three-year drought. In verse 41, we read, "And Elijah said unto Ahab, 'Get up and drink, for there is the sound of abundance of rain.'" Now, having demonstrated who the real God is, Elijah says, "I'm going to put the finishing touch to this demonstration. Now I'm going to bring rain back to this drought-stricken land which has had nothing for three years."

So, we have the description of Elijah looking for the rain to come, and finally in verse 45, we read, "And came to pass, in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and it was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins, and he ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." This man, suddenly under the power of God, becomes an Olympic athlete runner like you wouldn't believe. Ahab is in his chariot, cracking the whip and moving the horses to get home before the rain breaks. The clouds are all over. The place is thundering and lightning. There's going to be a deluge. Elijah gets out there with that flair for the dramatic that he had, and he says, "Let me act as your escort." He ties up his robe, and runs in front of the chariot as fast as the horses are running, and goes all the way to Jezreel, and then stands and ushers the king in through the gate.

You can imagine the humiliation to Ahab when he got to Jezebel at home, just all enraged, and told her about what this guy had done, and how humiliated he was, and then what he had done to her prophets. Well, boy, that's when the fur hit the fan.

Well, Jezebel decides to make her move. In 1 Kings 19, this man, Elijah, standing so tall and firm, now finds himself, instead of being honored and blessed for what he's done, becoming the victim of aggression. Jezebel declares her intention to retaliate by killing Elijah: "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. And Jezebel sent a messenger into Elijah saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more so, if I don't make your life the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." She says, "I'm going to send you to the same death that you sent my prophets to."

So, after all his bold and faithful service, Elijah finds himself once more a hunted man, and he really becomes discouraged. In verse 3, we read, "And when he saw that, he arose and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belonged to Judah, and left his servant there/" He flees from Jezebel. He could have stayed and trusted in God to preserve him. But he is human, and he gives in: "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." Self-pity overwhelms him: "And he said, 'It is enough now, O Lord. Take my life, for I am not better than my fathers." And the haunting cries, is there: "O Lord, how long?"

Verse 3 says, "And as he lay and slept under the juniper tree, behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him, 'Arise and eat.'" There was some food that had been prepared for him, and the angel had been sent by God to feed Elijah; to restore his strength; and, to prepare him to be able to bounce back.

Verse 8 says, "He arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food 40 days and 40 nights unto Horeb, the mount of God." Now, Elijah is on the lam, and he is hiding fearfully in a cave, expressing his discouragement after speaking so faithfully for God.

1 Kings 19:9-10: "He came there unto a cave, and lodged there. And, behold, the Word of the Lord came to him, and He said unto him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" He says, "Elijah, what are you doing here? You are the man who stood before all the prophets of Baal. You had a mighty victory, and here you sit, cowering like an animal hiding in this cave. What are you doing here?"

**Self-Pity**

Verse 10: "And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant; thrown down Your altars; and, slain your prophets with the sword. And I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." Here you have a man who has descended (in response to his understandable cry, "O Lord, how long?") into self-pity. Let us learn a lesson from that. When the pressure is on, and the things don't go well – you have been faithful to God, and you've been playing square with Him, you remember that He is a god of justice; you stand by the word; and, you wait for him to vindicate. You don't turn to self-pity. He had come to the mistaken notion that there was nobody else left who was faithful to God except himself – he was all that was left. Yet God showed Elijah, in a very tender way, beginning at verse 11, that he had been the agent of the greatest power in the world – the Word of God.

1 Kings 19:11: "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 broke in pieces the rock before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind." God gave a terrible windstorm. It was so great that it moved rocks. And God says, "That's not where the power is. That's not real power, Elijah: "But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, there was an earthquake." God shattered and rumbled the surface of the earth. And God says to Elijah, "That's not the power." That's not where the real power is:" "But the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire." A raging fire broke out and began tearing through the forest. This was very fearful – a firestorm before his eyes. And God says, "That's not where the power is, Elijah:" "After the fire, there was a still small voice" (the Word of God): "And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him again and said, 'What are you doing here?'"

And the point is that Elijah was shown that the real power was what he had been dealing with. The real power was in his hand as the man who knew the Word of God, and who proclaimed it boldly to Ahab and Jezebel. That's where the power was – not in these forces of nature. Consequently, here was the victory. And Elijah was being reminded that it is what God has said that really counts.

Well, the vindication of Elijah came, for Elijah was reminded that there were 7,000 in Israel which yet had not bowed their knees onto Baal, which had not reached down and worshiped him and kissed him. Elijah wasn't alone, and his self-pity was out of line. But God said, "Now for the final vindication of this man who had borne so much. He sent Elijah to now put in motion the final punishment of Jezebel and Ahab. He was to anoint Hazael the king of Syria. Jehu was now to be king of Israel to replace Ahab. And He also sent Elijah to anoint Elisha to be his own replacement. In 1 Kings 19:15-17, we have these directions given to him.

Now, these actions then set the stage for the destruction of Ahab and Jezebel; for the punishment of the northern kingdom of Israel; and, for the replacement of Elijah himself. God revealed that he was not alone. There were others that were standing, and Elijah had been an inspiration to them. So, Elijah's spirit is restored. His courage is up. He resumes his uncompromising position of preaching. He has the mind of God. And He has realized, by that demonstration as he stood looking out the face of that cave, where the real power lies – not in these tremendous forces of nature, but in what the Word of God can do in moving a life. Now, that is power, because that carries on through all eternity.

Ahab's son, Ahaziah, now comes into the picture in an injury. If you move to 2 Kings 1, Ahab has been removed, and he has been replaced by his son Ahaziah. Ahaziah is injured in a fall, and he seeks information concerning his recovery from Beelzebub, the god of Ekron. In 2 Kings 1:1-2, we read, "Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab, and Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber, and was in Samaria, and was sick, and he sent messengers, and said unto them, 'Go inquire of Beelzebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this disease.'"

Well, Elijah comes along, and he condemns this human viewpoint action, and predicts the death of Ahaziah. He is hitting the descendant just like he hit the father. 2 Kings 1:3-4: But the Angel of the Lord (which is the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) said to Elijah the Tishbite, 'Arise. Go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, 'Is it because there is not a God in Israel that you go to inquire of Beelzebub, the God of Ekron (in effect, inquiring of demon agents). Now, therefore thus says the Lord: You shall not come down from that bed to which you are gone, but you shall surely die.' And Elijah departed.'"

So, he gives the message to Ahaziah: "You're going to die." And the implication is, "Had you inquired of the Lord, you might have had a chance. But since you decided to go to the fortunetellers, you're going to die. Ahaziah sends a band of soldiers to capture Elijah and to bring him back to him. He's going to try the same old tactics that his mother and father did. He's going to bring this prophet down. In 2 Kings 1:9-12, you read about the confrontation where they came to take Elijah, and he brings fire down from heaven and destroys them. Then the angel of the Lord tells Elijah to go with a third group. There were three groups of soldiers that came. He knocks the first two off by fire from heaven. Then he goes with the third group, and 2 Kings 1:15-17 announce Ahaziah's doom face-to-face. The announcement had previously been sent through a messenger. Now he faces Ahaziah, and he says, "You're going to die for consulting with satanic forces:" "And so he did according to the Word of the Lord." And the result was in verse 18 that indeed Ahaziah died.

There's nothing so powerful as a believer who is functioning on God's viewpoint, and who is proclaiming God's divine viewpoint to society. He is an inevitable winner in the long haul. There were several occasions, indeed, when Elijah, because of his faithfulness on the one hand, and being treated like a dog on the other hand, by the very leaders of the nation who should have welcomed him and should have thanked him for giving them God's viewpoint and God's direction, knowing that this would be to their well-being and to their prosperity. Instead, they struck out against him. Indeed, he cried out, "How long, O, Lord?"

Well, the great and the high moment of divine vindication was at hand. Elijah's "How long, O, Lord?" ended with his being given the honor of being the only other man that went to heaven (along with Enoch) without dying. 2 Kings 2:9: "And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, 'Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken away from you.' And Elisha said, 'I pray you let a double-portion of your spirit be upon me. Give me, I pray, twice the spiritual power that you had.'" Now, Elijah had obviously been no mean spiritual force. And Elisha is asking to be twice that force: "And he said, 'You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so unto you. But if not, it shall not be so." Elijah says, "You've asked for a tough thing, Elisha, but I'll tell you this: God is about ready to take me, and He's going to do it right here. If you see me go, you know that God has said that you've got twice the portion. If you don't see me go, God has rejected that request:"

"And it came to pass as they went on and talked that, behold, there appeared a chariots of fire and horses of fire, and separated them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Verse 12 says, "And Elisha saw it, and he cried, 'My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen." And he saw no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. And He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters and said, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted to the one side and to the other, and Elijah went over." He saw him go. The answer was, "You've got twice the power that Elijah had – twice the power of this man who knew how to cry out in agony, 'O, Lord, how long?' and how to be vindicated. And you have his mantle."

The first thing he did was took that mantle, and you can almost see Elijah running down to the river, saying, "I wonder if it will work," and slapping that water, and zapping it open, and saying, "Hot dog, it really is there."

If you were to take the trouble to read through the record on Elisha, and what is recorded of his ministry in the miraculous, you would, interestingly enough, discover that we have exactly twice as many miracles recorded (performed) by Elijah as we have by his mentor, Elijah. Indeed, God vindicated his man by giving to his protégé twice the spiritual power that Elijah himself had enjoyed.

We have not touched one of the greatest of them: Moses. And you don't get this until you go through the Scripture, and you take it piece-by-piece-by-piece, and read every time this man gets a body blow for having done good, that you get the effect of what it must have been like for Moses to lead the people of Israel.

Likewise, you must read all of the details that made it possible for Paul to be sounding forth courageously a whole new age (the doctrine of the church) – the body of Christ (this brand new thing), and being treated like scum, and being treated with contempt, and the suffering for doing what? For telling the world the greatest truth since mankind began: the formation of the church (the body of Christ), and a group of human beings who are going to be to the Savior of the world as a bride is to a husband. There is no other group of people privileged to share that except those born during the church age – those who enter that body now, people which include you and myself.

So, when you do feel like crying out, "O Lord, how long?" preserve yourself from Elijah's self-pity, and preserve yourself from the accusation of your Job-like friends, and stand confident of the fact that the God of justice is certainly going to vindicate you. And the time will come when you will stand honored for having stood for the most powerful thing in the world, the doctrines of the Word of God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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