

What are you doing here, Elijah

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[0 : 00] We can turn back together to a reading in the book of 1 Kings chapter 19, and rereading the words of verse 13.

1 Kings 19 and 13, and when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

And behold, there came a voice to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah? Though in some ways there are some similarities between the situations of Jonah the prophet and Elijah the prophet, in other ways there are massive, somewhat incalculable differences.

The difference couldn't in some ways be more great. But what's amazing about both of the instances is in both situations it is the reaction that both these men have to what God is doing or not doing that leads them to where they end up.

In the case of Jonah, it would clearly seem that God has failed to do his bidding, as it were. That's always going to cause us great difficulty, where God doesn't do what we want him to do, when we think it's the right thing for him to do, when in fact it's simply what we want.

[1 : 33] That can lead us to all different sorts of complications, disillusionment, and in the case of Jonah, to even anger to the point of rather, he'd rather die than have to live and see the outcome of what God was doing.

But when it comes to Elijah, there's something that would seem very, very different. What he expected God to do didn't actually happen. But his concern and his response to that wasn't anger, but sheer disappointment.

And he really did, for different reasons, plunge into a very dark, dark place. But just as the Lord was taking Jonah out of the place he found himself in, so also he takes Elijah out of the place that he found himself in.

And while their reasons for wishing to die are different, the Lord, in his grace and in his mercy, his compassion, deals with both of them in such an amazing way.

This is, of course, a subject that requires and involves great caution and hesitation in some ways. Because as with other things, even when you think in terms of a testimony, someone telling the story of how they became a Christian, there's always a danger of saying certain things.

[2 : 55] And a listener will be unable to, being unable to identify with it, might think, well, there must be something wrong with me. If this is what you went through in becoming a Christian, and I didn't go through that in becoming a Christian, there must be something wrong with me.

I must be missing something. And the person giving the testimony, who maybe had a certain clear experience, might think that when it's missing in someone else's experience, there must be something lacking with them, but not with those who are doing the talking or sharing the testimony. In a slightly different but related way, looking at the life of Elijah, we may look and assess and come to our own conclusion about why he is the way he is.

And that relates to the first thing we want to look at. There's four places we find him in. We want to look at these. The first thing, if we find him, chapter 18, on a mountain. Second thing, into chapter 19, we find him under a tree.

And the third thing, we find him in a cave. And in the fourth and final place, we find him in a field where he is used by God to call and commission his successor, Elisha.

[4 : 02] Where do we find him in the first place on the mountain? That is, of course, in the previous chapter and the episode dealing with the miracles taking place on Mount Carmel, where this challenge was set.

The Israelites, you remember, being taken captive by the spell of Baal under the influence of particularly Jezebel. Ahab, of course, the king, is involved, but it's really Jezebel who's at the helm

and taking the reins and doing much of the damage.

It doesn't in any way excuse Ahab the king, but she's a very, very strong force to be reckoned with. And even if you wish to go back somewhat and reflect upon how it is that Jezebel became wife of the king of Israel through a compromise with the previous, it's the king of Judah.

You think, how could such a thing ever take place? But such a thing taking place led to the consequences that they did. And such is this horrific situation that the people are under the spell of Baalism.

And we're saying under the spell literally, not metaphorically. We would err if we think that false religion and Baalism and things like that back then or counterparts these days are simple ideologies or ways of thinking.

[5 : 16] If we look at what the Apostle Paul says, writing as he does to the Corinthian church, in teaching them about not going and participating in idolatrous feasts and also participating of the Lord's Supper, he says you can't do both.

You can't have participation or fellowship with demons and fellowship or participation with the Lord. What he is saying by that is that in these idolatrous practices, there is a real interaction with demonic beings.

It's not just a primitive way of thinking where people are somewhat behind where we are in our own advancement in the West, so we think, where they're now thinking the way we maybe in past generations thought.

Satan is really active and influential. It's very interesting, and some of you will know this already, that even in tracing, just think about this for a minute, not to go off the point, but just by way of hopefully trying to emphasize this, that when the so-called Prophet Muhammad received the revelations that eventually became what we know as the Quran, the account goes and the history of all of this goes by his own admission.

Now, we take that as we may, but it's recorded anyway that when he was in the process of receiving these revelations, now we would maybe tend to think he just made them up, they just, you know, were they originating with his own thinking, they were so real to him, the account goes, that at first he worried that it might have been a satanic or demonic influence over him.

[6 : 56] Now, that's very significant. You think about that. But so real were the things to him that, of course, he thought then, well, it couldn't be, it must be the only true God who's speaking to me.

But when you stand back of this and think about all that's involved in the darkness of that expression of Satanism, nothing short of that, that's no reflection on those caught up in it and were not suggesting that it is, but the ideology itself, that the man to whom it is traced was himself scared that such was the effect of these influences on his mind, that he thought to begin with it was demonic influence.

Now, we can look back and think it absolutely was. It absolutely was. So with Baalism and the spell of Baalism over Israel was a very, very dark place.

And it's in that context the prophet Elijah is ministering. He's up against the forces. He's got the odds humanly stacked against him. God has called him and God has commissioned him.

And in that process has qualified him to be a very, very strong man, spiritually, very, very strong man of faith. But we remember what James tells us in his New Testament letter.

[8 : 05] He was a man, Elijah that is, a man just like us. The old Bible puts it, a man of like passions as we are, or as we have it more recently, a man with a nature like ours.

He was no different. He wasn't superhuman. He wasn't angelic, though we'd look at him with awe and respect. Nonetheless, the narrative shows us, as we'll see in just a minute or two, that he was human just like the rest of us.

But we find him on this mountain. And you know how the situation goes. Elijah confronts Ahab, confronts the prophets of Baal, and the scene is set, the stage is set.

And basically what it involves is the God who answers prayer by sending fire down on two prepared sacrifices. He is the true God.

And of course, the prophets of Baal. They go at it flat out, and they're crying, and they're screaming, and they're cutting themselves. You can see the frenzy. This isn't normal human practice. They're hyped up.

[9 : 05] They're in a realm of thinking, in a realm of feeling not just desperate or humiliated, but this is the way. They're shedding their own blood. They're cutting themselves to try and manipulate Baal to actually answer them.

It's so dark, all of this. You see in the very midst of it how we find Elijah in such a place of prominence, spiritually speaking. Verse 27, chapter 18.

At noon, Elijah mocked him. He said, cry aloud, for he is a God. Either he's musing, or he's relieving himself, Baal that is. Or he's on a journey, or perhaps he's asleep, and he must be awakened.

And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. And as midday passed, they raved on.

You get the scene. You picture what's happening. These people are in a frenzy, and they're mutilating themselves, harming themselves, cutting themselves, in order for their God, Baal, to answer their prayers.

[10:11] Of course he doesn't. But see Elijah goading them, and the sheer sarcasm and the mockery, all in front of the gathered people of Israel who are there, in order for them, hopefully, to see the futility of believing in Baal.

And of course, when Elijah comes forward, he prays, verse 36, chapter 18, O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I'm your servant, that I've done all these things at your word.

This is what he's about. Answer me, O Lord. Answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.

This is the whole point. It isn't to win an argument. It isn't to outdo anyone. Primarily, the grand objective the prophet has is that the people of Israel will know that Jehovah is God, that he is the servant of Jehovah, and that he is turning their hearts back.

God, that is, is turning their hearts back to himself. And as soon as he prays, the fire comes down, consumes the whole lot. What a scene, what a spectacle, what an experience.

[11:23] What a place of honor and exhilaration, spiritually speaking, to be confronted like this with the miraculous, with the divine. And not only that, but when, verse 39, the people saw it, all the people saw it, they fell on their faces.

They said, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God. No more Baal. It is Jehovah. It is Yahweh. It is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

But what's Elijah going to feel in that situation? What would you or I feel in that situation? We would feel sheer exhilaration and joy, relief. We don't maybe know what we'd feel in this situation to see to all appearances, this people turning back to God through the divine intervention that has just taken place.

How would you feel if you saw a moving throughout the villages? For whatever reason, you just come and be with you to John 6 as an example.

The early stages of John's account of our Lord's ministry and the people are flocking to Jesus.

There are many, many disciples following him. And then he begins to teach them about the fact that he is the bread of life.

[12:35] And that unless one eats his flesh and drinks his blood, they have no part in him. And then they start asking these questions. What is he talking about? And they say it's a hard saying. Who can take it?

And then many of them turned their backs on him and didn't follow him ever again. So on the surface, you can have a moving that to all appearance is a moving of God's grace in a multitude. But give it time. Oh, this sounds so pessimistic, doesn't it? But ordinarily speaking, we're drawing attention maybe to what the scripture would emphasize for us. That we should exercise great caution when there appears to be out of nowhere, not always, but when there appears to be out of nowhere a massive movement.

That we should exercise great caution and give it time. Not to be the dampeners on anything. Don't mean that. But to be hesitant. And in the words of the late and the great Jonathan Edwards, preaching from the words of the gospel, a few there be that find it.

Meaning the narrow gate. But he said to people, don't take hope too soon. And that sounds so terribly negative. Holding out the lifeline and the gospel to people and then saying, oh, but by the way, don't take hope too soon.

[13:49] What was he talking about? Whether you would agree with his emphasis in that context or not. He was someone who witnessed many people come in times of great awakening. Great spiritual movement.

But in that situation, he saw a significant number fall away. It took time. But in the beginning and at the first appearance, just like here on Mount Carmel, the people turn.

They fall on their faces and they cry, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God. Not only that, they go the next step, do they not? Elijah, verse 40, says, seize the prophets of Baal. Let not one of them escape.

And they seized them and they slaughtered them. Looks like a massive reformation. And a massive revival. And a massive repentance. But it was none of the above.

But Elijah thinks it was. And if you and I were there in that situation, there's no doubt we would think it was as well. And how joyful. We know it's not over yet. He's got to come down off the mountain.

[14:48] This is verse 41. Elijah goes to Ahab. And he tells him, before he's got any actual, visual confirmation of this, he says, get up, eat and drink, for there's the sound of the rushing of rain.

For these years of drought and the consequent famine. They're coming to an end at the word of Elijah, just like Elijah had said to Ahab, you won't see any of this.

Rain until you hear from me. And Ahab was furious with him throughout that period and looked upon Elijah as the cause of the trouble in Israel. Called him, in fact, the troubler of Israel.

When it was the other way around. But anyway, here he is coming to Ahab and tells him, get ready.

The rain's coming. Isn't it amazing in 42 that Ahab did what he was told?

Does that tell us something about the kind of man he was? He was a ruthless man. He was very childish. One little part of the kingdom of Israel he didn't own or wanted but didn't have.

[15:51] And he went and he was so upset. And Jezebel was basically pandering to him. Oh, what's wrong with you? And he explained. And then she orchestrated that the land that he didn't have but wanted would be given to him.

Like a spoiled child, basically. But here he is in front of Elijah. And he does what he's told. Ahab went up to eat and drink.

And Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel. And he prays. And we know the narrative the way he prays. And he prays with persistence. He prays with faith.

Sends his servant time and time again to look on the horizon for seeing something we don't need to look very far to see. The clouds coming. And the sign of rain approaching. 44.

The seventh time. The servant said, behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising from the sea.

And he said, go and tell Ahab. Get your chariot. Go down in case the rain stops you.

[16:45] All of a sudden the rain comes. But see the miracle. And younger people may wish to try and have a good look into this and calculate from information outside of the text of scripture.

But accurate information nonetheless. The distance he had to travel from Mount Carmel where he begins here. And where he is, we're told in 45, Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

And 46, the hand of the Lord was on Elijah. And he gathered up his garment and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. How far did he have to go? Well, what's miraculous about this is that there you've got Ahab going flat out on his chariot.

And yet Elijah gets there to Jezreel before him. It's miraculous. Stand in Elijah's shoes. What a day it's been. What a blessing you've witnessed.

And to all appearance the Lord has finally broken into the situation of darkness and blackness and ignorance and lostness. And brought light and life and liberty to all appearance.

[17:50] Until, second thing, we see him under a tree. Verse 1 of chapter 19. Ahab goes home and tells Jezebel all Elijah had done. And she goes into a rage. Just see her for the kind of person she is.

She's very angry. She's very dark. She's very abandoned. And you would maybe think, and I would maybe think, that Ahab having witnessed what he witnessed, And Jezebel hearing about what Ahab had witnessed on the mountain, with the fire coming down at the prayer of Elijah, with the rain coming back at the prayer of Elijah.

And the turning of the people in response to all of that. That you'd think, she would say, Ahab, you know, we better start thinking about this God.

That's what we'd imagine, we'd expect. And you might, in your own mind, be thinking just the same thing. That if only there was this, or there was that, or if there was the next thing, then I would find it easier to believe.

Isn't it the case that we crave something? And that, in a sense, there is that part of us that is dissatisfied with and determined to refuse to accept the testimony of God's word.

[19:08] We want more. We want something else. You know, God may condescend in his wisdom, in his own way, and in his grace to do certain things in a life where he's bringing that person to himself.

But we mustn't sit back and fold our arms and say, well, somewhat like Herod and Pilate sending Jesus to Herod before Herod sends him back to Pilate. Going through the mock trials and Herod's there folding his arms and expecting Jesus to do something for him when he's met with silence. But we mustn't expect that. We're given no basis in Scripture to expect that God will do anything. We've got to listen to him. You know what? Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God. You remember the situation of the rich man and Lazarus? Signs and wonders. That's what we need. And so we have the rich man, and the picture of him is in torment. He's in the flames. He's died, and he's gone to where his sins have taken him. And from that place, and the parable unfolds, and I know, and you know yourself, maybe there's debate whether it is actually a parable, but we believe it is.

[20:13] For different reasons, we can't go into just now. But there's a conversation between hell and heaven. Does that happen? Need say anything else at the moment? But in that conversation, the rich man says to Abraham in heaven, send Lazarus back to my brothers so that they don't come to this place.

And the implication is, and the thrust of the argument is, Abraham, if my brothers, irrespective of the motivation the rich man has, and even asking this, if Lazarus goes back from the dead, and this isn't the Lazarus Jesus rose.

This is a different one. You'll know that anyway. But the rich man is thinking in his own fallenness and his own darkness of mind that if someone comes back from the dead, and people who knew him realize he's come back from the dead, they'll believe.

No, they won't. Isn't that what Abraham said? They've got Moses and the prophets. They've got the Bible. Let them listen. Neither will they believe, Abraham says in that parable, if one rose from the dead.

You know, the other Lazarus was raised from the dead. And he went back among the Jewish people. And what happened but the religious leaders, seeing the influence.

[21:31] The living presence of the raised Lazarus was having on the people. Determined, decided, planned, expected, and hoped to kill Lazarus.

Don't believe for a minute that a sign will change your heart or life, or change any one of us. It may be used in God's dealings with someone, but don't think that it's going to change anyone. Did it change Ahab?

No. Not for the better. Not for the better. Or it can change you for the worse. J.C. Ryle put it this way, speaking, however, about the word and not about the wonders or the miracles.

The same, meaning the sun, the same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay. The twofold effect of the same thing, the same means, the same communication from God.

So there they are as hardened and as dead and as lost in their sins. Unmoved in a positive way by the miracles that God has performed through the ministry of Elijah. What does Jezebel resort to?

[22:32] She sends a messenger to Elijah and says, you're dead by this time tomorrow. And may God do it to me. May the gods do it to me. And more also, if I do make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.

So what would you expect Elijah to do in that situation? What would we expect him to do? Well, we would expect him, and this is maybe where we go off on one and misunderstand and maybe misrepresent the state of mind that he's in.

We would think, well, one thing he should do is turn immediately to God and pray and remember what God has just done. The previous day. Previous days.

Previous weeks. Months and years. And say, well, she can say what she wants and she can do what she wants. Just like when they came to Jesus with the threats from Herod saying that he's going to kill you.

And Jesus said, go and tell that fox that I'll do miracles today and tomorrow and the next day I'll be perfected. Meaning our Lord is, of course, being in control and knowing his time and knowing his hour.

[23:38] That this Herod cannot lay a single finger on me. Just like he said to Pilate, you could have no authority over me unless it were given to you from above. But Elijah isn't like that.

We'd expect him to be like that. But we're told in verse 3 that he was afraid. And he rose and he ran for his life. He ran for his life.

You know, the commentators fall down on one of two sides in this. And maybe the most common approach to this reaction that Elijah has.

And maybe there's a measure of truth in it. Maybe there's full truth in it. But little understanding or sympathy or empathy or concern. Is that here is a man who rather than walking by faith is now walking by sight.

And rather than being focused upon God is now being focused upon himself. Rather than fearing God, he's fearing a woman. Now that's all good and well. And if we objectively in our armchair look on at this man's life and think, Oh, well, of course he's wrong and he's failing and he isn't walking by faith.

[24 : 47] And he has succumbed to something external to himself that's led him to this position. And we just pull ourselves back and say, Wait a minute. Rather than coming down on the symptoms, we should actually try and figure out the cause.

You know, so many of our own problems in our spiritual lives can come from very, very straightforward factors. Easily resolved.

Now, of course, there are some situations. I mean, this is a bad situation the prophet Elijah is in. Because he reaches this low place where he not only fears and gets up and runs for his life.

And goes into the wilderness by himself, leaving his servant at Beersheba. But he prays, verse 4 tells us. In exasperation, it is enough.

Now, Lord, take away my life. For I am no better than my father's. Some people look at this and they say, You know what? Elijah, pull yourself together. You mustn't be so concerned about your ministry as to think when it doesn't work out that you should just die.

[25 : 57] You'd rather die than face failure. Some will look at this and say, This is the failure of the prophet. This is ministerial failure. He hasn't succeeded. I know we've got to watch, in a way, the pressure that can come on whoever it might be in God's will that may be sent this way or anyone anywhere in any position of Christian work here already within the congregation or beyond.

Where there is this pressure of statistics. It can crush. It can break. Because within the spiritual realm, and we know it already, but maybe we need to remind ourselves from time to time.

There are objectives that are humanly impossible. Paul may plant. Paul may plant. Apollos may water what has been planted. It is God alone who gives the growth.

And there are some within the church that they say, Because God alone gives the growth, let's not even plant and let's not even water what's planted. We just let go and let God. Others will go frantic and become so hands-on with plans and arrangements and objectives and goals.

And the whole thing revolves around what we do. Adopting methodologies and strategies and means that at one level will work. But remove all of these. The thing will just fall apart.

[27 : 13] You can build it around a person as well. Remove the person. It falls apart. So there is that pressure. There can be that massive weight upon the prophet.

I don't think this is what's happening. For a single minute, Elijah is feeling sorry for himself. In terms of thinking, poor me. Where some may look at him and say, come on, pull yourself together.

Stop feeling so sorry for yourself. Stop thinking that you're a failure. And just get up and get going. But just as with Jonah, so also with Elijah. What does God do with him? Well, God knows what's wrong with him.

God knows what's wrong with him. There is a sense, of course, where people may find themselves in a situation where, you know, someone said recently.

How did David, the psalmist, for example, reading as we do the Psalms and the way he speaks, how did David cope without antidepressants?

[28 : 15] Now, that thrust of that statement was basically to say, if we were spiritual enough, we wouldn't need them ourselves. That's completely, that's a very dangerous thing to say.

Where we would blur the distinction between a situation of mental illness with a situation where one is in a spiritual struggle. They're not exactly the same thing.

There may, of course, overlap. There may be cause and effect. But there are situations. And you think, for example, one instance in the Bible itself of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar, the great king who lost his mind and thought he was an animal.

He actually lost his mind temporarily, mercifully temporarily. But nonetheless, he was in a state of mind where who's going to go and tell him to pull himself together? And then you might say, well, yes, fair enough.

But it wasn't a doctor that dealt with him. Yes, fair enough. But we're in a situation where when there is mental illness, we thank God for intervention that is both professional and medical.

[29 : 18] And for all we know, there may be some here who know the benefits and the blessings of that. Now, there was a situation quite a while ago. I've been in a company, in a fellowship, and there was a situation being referred to, not gossip.

But there was a situation of someone who was struggling with their mental health. This was on someone who's going through a period of what we would maybe refer to, which we think is happening here with Elijah, of what can we refer to it as a spiritual depression.

Not to completely separate what is spiritual from what is mental. They overlap, of course, but the causes and symptoms and effects may differ. But someone was thinking about someone who had real struggles with their mental health, not simply a hard time in their Christian lives.

And this person said, and has shuddered to even repeat it, All they need is to get out for a walk in the moor with me, and that'll sort them out. As if.

Now, what is that all about? It's about someone who hasn't a clue what they're talking about. And other people would look and say, look, the Philippines are told to rejoice in the Lord always.

[30 : 23] So, does that mean you come alongside someone who's going through a breakdown and say, pull yourself together? What's wrong with you, man? What's wrong with you, woman?

Of course not. But if someone has even been on the threshold, and have looked over that cliff, and have maybe been brought back, or someone who has even gone over that, they'll realize the vast difference between being in a situation of helplessness, humanly speaking, and hopelessness, humanly speaking.

The difference between that and being in a position where all it takes is some spiritual counsel, and in the case of Elijah, some very straightforward solutions to put him back on track.

Well, what was it with this man, Elijah, that he was needing? Well, Jezebel announces her curse, but then Jehovah comes with his comfort, and what does he do?

Isn't it a thought? He provides him with food and with rest. God looks at Elijah, and God sees the problem with Elijah. He doesn't scold him.

[31 : 28] Oh, he comes to him, and he says, what are you doing here? Questions the way God deals with us. Doesn't come down on him. Doesn't break him down. Doesn't bring the rod down on his back.

He asks him the question, why are you here? Think about it. And Elijah opens up and tells him, I have not been pitying myself because I failed, but I have been exceedingly jealous for the Lord. Your glory, your honor, your name. They haven't actually turned. They haven't actually believed. They haven't actually repented. They haven't come to love and honor you as I hoped and prayed and longed.

It is all about you. It's not about me, he's saying. And that is what's wrong. But that doesn't explain why he isn't coping with that. He'd coped for years before this, but the crux of the matter comes to the crisis on that mountaintop.

And the subsequent crash and collapse in his own body and in his own mind, where he is exhausted physically. So he needs to sleep.

[32 : 34] And twice we're told he falls asleep. We don't know how long exactly, but not only that, but the angel comes and gives him food, nourishment for his body.

His body is weakened. He's physically exhausted, mentally exhausted. He's drained. And his requirement is, first of all, to do with his body and to do with his mind.

You know, someone would come to Elijah and just quote the scriptures to him. There's a danger of us doing that. I don't mean to put down or criticize or negate that approach in every instance.

But there are some times, by quoting the scriptures to someone in a certain place, it's going to make them feel worse. which maybe sounds counterintuitive. Surely it is the word of the Lord that heals.

Doesn't the psalm tell us he sent his word and healed them? Yes, but we mustn't particularize what is put in a general way. Every situation is different. What does God do with Elijah?

[33 : 34] Well, before he gives him the disclosure of his own character and the disclosure of his own purpose, he makes the man sleep. And he gives him food. Remember a situation of a man who came to the late Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, of course, having the medical background in his own life, he had the insight into many factors of a person's life and situation that could be diagnosed, whereas the person themselves thought the problem was spiritual.

This man came in a right state, couldn't figure out what was wrong with him, struggling praying and struggling with reading the scriptures and not benefiting as he used to. And while, of course, there may be many different reasons for that, one may be backslidden or secret sin, so on and so forth, what Lloyd-Jones said to this man is you need to take a holiday, meaning by that, not that you have to go away, but you need to stop.

The problem was he was exhausted. He was worn out. And when he was in that position, he wasn't able to pray, he wasn't able to read and to benefit the way he had been able to previously.

And so God takes Elijah, gives him rest, and then brings him, third thing, we'll be brief, the third thing is to a cave. Isn't it amazing that he's taken by God to what is referred to as the mountain of God?

This is all reminiscent of Moses, isn't it? Because once God has provided strength for Elijah, he's given a great measure of strength mentally, great measure of strength physically, so much so that he's able to go 40 days and 40 nights, verse 8 tells us, to Horeb, the mount of God.

[35 : 17] This is all reminding this great man of God about his past and about his heritage and about, may we call him, his hero, Moses. Where God took Moses onto the mountain and God, in a different situation, of course, revealed himself to Moses and announced his name to Moses and his character.

So much so, Moses was consumed with the revelation and unknown to himself was actually praying for something that would have killed him. Show me your glory, he said.

Show me your glory. Well, here is this great man. God is going to show him something amazing. By revealing his power and majesty, he passes by. Verse 11, he passes by in a strong wind, but the Lord isn't in the wind.

Passes by in an earthquake, but the Lord isn't in the earthquake. Passes by in a fire, but the Lord isn't in the fire. What is all this about? This is the dramatic, this is the audible, this is the visible, this is the extraordinary.

This is, in other words, the Mount Carmel where God does the humanly impossible and the incalculable against all the odds. But it doesn't change the people.

[36 : 28] So what God, we think, is saying to Elijah is don't expect me to always do the majestic and the glorious in such emphatically demonstrated ways.

Where is the Lord found? Well, we're told in verse 12, after the fire there was the sound of a low whisper, the still small voice, or as it may be, a thin silence.

Very picturesque, hard to conceptualize, a thin silence, but this is a real quiet noise. But in that relative almost silence, compared with the earthquake and the fire and the wind, the prophet discerns the presence of God.

So while he's looking for it all on the mountain, doesn't see it, thought he would, he sees it in the thin silence. What is that saying to you and to me?

Well, isn't it the same thing? We need to be reminded of what God is actually doing. Not to despise the day of small things. Not to feel crushed when faced with the appearance of God doing great things in great ways in great places through great people.

[37 : 40] May God bless all of his people and all of his servants and all of their work, those who serve him faithfully. We mean nothing less. But let's not be crushed or discouraged when we think that that is the only way God performs his work.

But when we see it only in small ways, in small places, through small people, it's still the work of God. In fact, that is, I think, what he's saying to Elijah.

That's the way I'm going to do it. How does he explain that? Well, he explains to him, can we paraphrase, that I am going to do what you wish and thought I had done on the top of Mount Carmel through people other than yourself.

Now, this is the test of the real man, isn't it? Remember, it was with the ministry of Robert Murray McShane that on the occasion of him going away to Israel and William Burns coming and taking his place for that period, wasn't it in that period that God's Spirit came in great power in the absence of

the minister himself.

How would you feel if you were the one who was to spend so much time and prayer invested in people or in a situation that seemed to be fruitless, relatively speaking, and once you're someone else for whatever period of time and someone else takes over and there it is, it all happens.

[39 : 02] That's the test of someone. How concerned are we really about God's glory and honor compared with our own? Well, Elijah takes it like a spiritual man that he is.

He's come through the situation. What is God saying to him? 15, verse 15. Go return to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive, anoint Hazael over Syria, Jehu over Israel, and Elisha in your place.

And this is the reason why. Verse 17. The one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will put to death. Jehu. The one who escapes the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel in ease that have not bowed to Baal, every mouth that has not kissed them.

Elijah, don't you worry for a single second. I will build my church. The gates of hell will not prevail against it. I'm just going to do it through someone else, but you're going to be involved in this.

You're going to have the honor of anointing these kings. And you're going to be involved in anointing, manner of speaking. The prophet is going to succeed you.

[40 : 10] Elisha. And there's a sense where greater things are going to take place. Through less extraordinary means. But isn't that the lesson so often that we need to learn? God is going to do his work his way.

And this great man, Elisha, is called. And he shows that he's turning his back on the old calling altogether by taking up the yoke and using them as the wood for the sacrifice of the oxen.

He's basically bidding farewell to the old calling. And he's committing his way to Elijah and through that to the service of the Lord himself. And our Lord in the New Testament says it, does he not?

Using, no doubt, the echo at least, if not the very emphasis of this situation. No man having put to his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.

It's to be like Elisha. And of course, while we know this is a call to the prophetic office, there is a sense to, in a different way, of course, but nonetheless related, if we may so say, in our being called into the Christian life, there has to be this absolute and total dedication where in a sense the past and the old has to be burnt up and left behind and we move on.

[41 : 29] May God help us to see as we look into these sections of his word. May there be hope and may there be healing, may there be help for all of us as we come under his word once again.

Well, let's conclude our worship and see.