

JUNE 18

1 Kings 19

This is a very cool portion of Scripture. Elijah had fought hard for the Lord and now in his eyes he had failed. God was extremely gentle with him.

Apparently Ahab and Jezebel had a palace at Jezreel too. In Jezebel, we meet one of two women rulers in Israel/Judah. This mother and daughter team were both evil, and both carried their agenda through with a cold and bloody determination.

Vs. 1-2 This wasn't an idol threat. ☺ Jezebel vowed before whatever she believed in, to kill Elijah. Now before we judge Elijah too harshly, we have to remember Elijah was not a super hero. We give him that status. James says that Elijah was just like us. We have seen enough men and women of God to know that they lived from one fear and one act of faith to another. Also, Elijah is never condemned for running. I have to think that God knew this would happen and that it was within His plan for Elijah and the events that would now unfold.

V. 3 This seems like a huge contradiction. Elijah had performed such a great miracle, and now this woman threatens him and he takes off. Elijah must have expected that the people would return to God. There were no riots in the streets and no shouts for reform. Carmel had been a spectacular and cool event. Now Elijah understood that change wouldn't happen. He had failed. Not only that, he was completely pumped out emotionally. They say you are always at your most vulnerable spiritually and emotionally after you have had a spiritual success where you have poured yourself out for the Lord. Elijah was empty and disappointed.

Obviously, Elijah personalized this too much, but so did Moses and Samuel when they were rejected. Moses wanted to die and Samuel got all depressed. All of them had invested everything in seeing the people come to God. It had been so important for them, that when the people rejected God, they took it to heart. We are no better.

Vs. 4-8 What can you say? God was totally understanding and gave him what he needed. As we'll see, the Lord is good about waking and helping His needy followers.

Vs. 9-18 Notice that God was not in the spectacular. He was in the quiet. One of the dangers of looking for the spectacular is to miss God's working in the quiet things the Spirit is doing all around us. I think that's why we are told to abide in Christ, living in the present in the harvest, looking for what our Lord is showing us that He is doing. And sometimes, the Lord's quiet working in the harvest is pretty spectacular. Abiding in Christ makes us aware of our Lord's working in the harvest around us.

Notice also, that God totally agreed with Elijah as shown in the judgments He pronounced. What had happened at Mt. Carmel was absolutely critical to the future of the northern kingdom. The people had missed their window of opportunity. What was happening here was equally as important. God gave Elijah three tasks that would spell judgment for Israel.

V. 16 Elisha would be "the closer."

V. 18 In Romans, Paul says that God kept these people separate by His grace. Not "bowing or kissing" didn't just mean they hadn't worshiped Baal, it meant that they had not participated in the sexual worship of Baal. Notice that the fact that these people succeeded in resisting this sensual idolatry was God's grace upon them.

Vs. 19-21 Elisha would also be a great prophet, but his ministry would be in providing hope as the lights were being turned off. Notice that Elisha was a godly man living in an ungodly country. He also came from a rich background, though he was a very "hands on" rich kid.

V. 20 This might seem confusing in the wording of this verse in English. Basically Elijah says to him, "I'm not stopping you. Just think about what I've just done to you." Elisha fully understood.

Sacrificing the animals, burning the yokes and holding this feast, was Elisha's way of burning his bridges to his future inheritance in his family and accepting the call of God.

It is interesting that from now on, Elisha will appear to be a poor prophet of God. He chose to be poor to follow God. Following God wouldn't look "successful." But Elisha followed and God used him. For us as disciples, we are faced with the same situation. We are called to follow, to be poor now, and to work in the harvest knowing that a storm of judgment is coming that cannot be held back.

Acts 12:1-23

Vs. 1-5 This is the first governmental persecution of the church. This Herod was the grandson of Herod the Great (who hunted Jesus and killed the babies) and the nephew of the Herod who killed John the Baptist and saw Jesus just before Jesus died. There were just way too many Herods.

V. 3 This guy was liked by the Jews and went out of his way to please the Jews. It appears that he instigated the persecution of the church and might even have dared to see if he could kill a follower of Jesus. Once it worked and he saw the Jews liked it, Herod must have gotten all excited. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was the Passover and the week that followed. Although the Roman capital of Judah was on the coast in Caesarea, the governor always came to Jerusalem during the feasts to help control the mobs and to look like he was true blue.

Vs. 6-11 Isn't it interesting the Lord waited until the very night before the execution to free Peter? This is the second event in today's reading, where an angel wakes up a servant of God who needed guidance and assistance. This was a very cool deliverance.

Vs. 12-17 This comical story introduces many things. First, it mentions John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. Mark, the failed servant, will become the first writer of a Gospel. He will also become the companion of Peter in Peter's future ministry. This story also shows that James, Jesus' brother, was already in the leadership of the church in Jerusalem. Paul mentions James in Galatians 1:17. Third, this was one of those things that got Peter out of Jerusalem. We'll see Peter again in Jerusalem in chapter 15. After that, Peter will leave the story of Acts and it appears that he will leave Jerusalem and become a traveling maker of disciples.

Vs. 18-19 Caesarea was the Roman capital of Israel, and that is where the Roman governors ruled. You've already heard of that city several times regarding Phillip and Cornelius. It will also be an important city at the end of Acts.

Vs. 20-23 The Lord had more than enough on Herod, and He could have struck him down at any time. I find it very interesting that after the Lord had allowed Herod to do this to the church, fulfilling His purposes, He took Herod out. Apparently the illness came immediately, but death came slowly.

As disciples, we need to realize that the Lord is still directing His and our work in the harvest. We need to be engaged and committed to abiding and following, ready to reach out to the lost and to make disciples, who make disciples.

Psalm 136

This was the first psalm I ever read that impressed me with the brilliance of seeing everything surrounded by God's *steadfast love*.

Now that we have a good bit of the OT behind us, we know that some of the things mentioned were rough years and rough spots for the people. But just like in our lives, regardless of the event and the way we feel, what carries us through is to remember that *His steadfast love endures forever*. In fact, I'm convinced that the Lord allows us, even guides us, into situations to prove to us that *His steadfast love endures forever*. And then I know that the Lord allows us to wait, to see if we really believe that *His steadfast love endures forever*.

Vs. 1-3 This seems to be acknowledging God being good and almighty, whose *love endures forever*.

Vs. 4-9 It is a wonder that we know God as the creator of the universe. All He created was guided by His love. What is particularly amazing is that He loves us.

Vs. 10-22 This isn't just Israel's history; it is the history of God's redemptive plan of love for mankind. I've got to admit that it's interesting how God mentions the victories over Sihon and Og so often. As we've seen twice today, God knows how to rescue His servants. It may not be His will to do so, but we should never doubt that He knows what's happening, nor His power to rescue.

Vs. 23-26 And in all of His thoughts and saving acts toward us and to everyone who receives Christ, *His steadfast love endures forever*.

Proverbs 17:14-15

V. 14 There are lots of creative ways to understand the *letting out water*. The point Solomon (a guy) is getting at is that once you start, it is very, very hard to stop and most likely you will keep on *letting out water* (anger) until you are empty. So don't start. The time to stop is before you start and make a big mess.

V. 15 I know we would never do this, but it sort of reminds me of some of the dumb stuff that is said in a quarrel, just because a person doesn't want to admit they are wrong.