



***Becoming Fully Devoted Followers
by Studying the Followers Before Us***

WEEK 20

ELIJAH

MAY 14-20, 2007

DAY	<i>THROUGH THE BIBLE</i>	<i>ABBREVIATED STUDY</i>
Monday	1 Chronicles 1-6; Psalm 96	1 Kings 17:1-16; Psalm 96
Tuesday	1 Chronicles 7-12; Psalm 97	1 Kings 17:17-24; Psalm 97
Wednesday	1 Chronicles 13-18; Psalm 98	1 Kings 18:1-15; Psalm 98
Thursday	1 Chronicles 19-24; Psalm 99	1 Kings 18:16-45; Psalm 99
Friday	1 Chronicles 25-27; Psalm 100	1 Kings 19; Psalm 100

READ

1 Kings 17:1-16

Psalms 96

REFLECT

For the last three weeks we have studied the three kings who ruled Israel before the division into the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The eighth king of Israel was Ahab, who reigned from 874 to 853 BC. Ahab did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of the kings before him. He married Jezebel, the daughter of the King of the Sidonians, he began to serve and worship Baal, and he set up an altar to Baal in the temple of Baal that he had built in Samaria.

We are introduced to Elijah without any background and there is no story of his birth or his youth. The name Elijah means “The Lord is my God” which clearly becomes the message Elijah brings to the story as he was sent to vigorously oppose, by word and action, both Baal worship and those who engaged in Baal worship. The first thing that Elijah the Tishbite says to King Ahab is “As the Lord, God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”

Take a minute and put yourself in the position of Elijah. You are a prophet, and are assigned to the King to provide him with counsel and direction which is given to you by the Lord. The first thing you tell the King is there will be a drought in the land. How would you expect the King to respond – would you expect him to receive you with open arms, or would you expect your counsel to be rejected?

How is it in the world today? We are often asked to provide counsel to others and yet we are seldom given all the details, we seldom know all of the circumstances and we certainly do not know how our counsel will

be received. What is it that we need to do so that when God sends us on an errand we will know our task and how to convey God’s word with understanding and with faith? Do we have the courage to share the truth with those in authority or are we quiet and let the chips fall where they may? Do we know our Bible well enough to have confidence to share our faith with others and to be able to guide others to meaningful and helpful Biblical passages, with thoughtfulness and understanding?

Next God sends Elijah into the wilderness where there is no food, only a brook of fresh water. God provides for Elijah by sending ravens that provide bread and meat for Elijah each morning and evening. The time in the wilderness becomes a time for reflecting and refreshing for Elijah before he is faced with his next task.

RESPOND

Do we take the time we need for reflecting and refreshing? Most of us do not, for we find ourselves on the treadmill of life, a treadmill that seems to have no end. When was the last time we stopped and talked to another person – I mean really stopped and talked (and listened). Do we find ourselves so caught up in everything that is going on around us that we cannot focus on the other person?

When was the last time you celebrated the Sabbath? The last time you got off the treadmill and spent a whole day in prayer, reading and reflecting so that God could refresh your soul? Taking time for God is one of the most important things that we can ever do – He wants our attention and love, we need His attention and His love.

- G.E.

READ

1 Kings 17:17-24

Psalms 97

REFLECT

When the brook dries up, God sends Elijah to a small town where Elijah is to rely on a widow for food and shelter – food and shelter from a widow that has virtually nothing for herself and her son, but she trusts Elijah because God has commanded her to help. The widow was concerned because she had only enough for herself and her son. Elijah asked her for a piece of bread. The widow complies with his request and God rewards her with a jar of flour that is never used up and a jug of oil that never runs dry.

Some time later her son becomes ill, gets worse and worse, and then stops breathing. Her question to Elijah – “Man of God, did you come to remind me of my sin?” How often do we consider a connection between bad things happening and whether or not God is punishing us for our sin? How easy it is to forget that God sent His son Jesus so that we could break that connection. God does not cause evil to punish us for our sinful nature (we are good enough at that by ourselves); what God does provide is forgiveness for our sins by the life and death of Jesus.

In this story the widow immediately reacts to her son’s death by incorrectly concluding that God caused her son to die because of some sin or sins that she had committed. Yet, look at her life in this story – she trusts God when he commands her to help Elijah, she trusts Elijah when he comes into her house and God rewards her faith with a bottomless jar of flour and a bottomless jug of oil.

When Elijah hears about the death of her son, he goes to the son and picks him up, holds him close and cries out to the Lord “O Lord, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?” Elijah stretched himself out three times over the boy, God heard his prayer and the boy’s life returned to him. The widow said “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is true.”

This is the first story told in the Bible of God raising a person from the dead. Note the circumstances: the widow trusts God, takes in the prophet Elijah, questions her own sinful nature as the cause and asks God to intervene. Note, however, that Elijah expects God to bring life to the boy.

RESPOND

Do we have the faith of the widow or the faith of Elijah? Do we go to God in prayer expecting Him to answer or are we going to prayer hoping He will answer? Will God always answer our prayer the way we want Him to? No, and I am glad that He does not always answer the way I want – but He always answers our prayers – we just don’t always have the eyes to see.

We are often given the opportunity to witness to others, to be present when others need company, when others need to know that God loves them, when others are hurting or are lonely and we find ourselves as the messenger of God’s word to them. Do we speak the truth? Have we listened to God so that we know that what we speak is from Him? Do we personally know God’s love so that when we share His love with others His love is clearly present?

Would others say “the word of the Lord from your mouth is true?”

- G.E.

READ

I Kings 18:1-15

Psalms 98

REFLECT

The Lord told Elijah to “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.” So Elijah set out to find Ahab.

The story takes a different tack by introducing Obadiah to the scene. Obadiah is in charge of Ahab’s palace and maintained his own personal faith as a devout believer in the Lord of Israel. When Jezebel was killing off all the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah protected two groups of 50 prophets by placing them in safe caves and providing them with food and water.

The drought was causing a famine and Ahab was calling in all of his resources to try and save as many of his horses and mules as he could from death. Ahab and Obadiah divided the land into two search areas and headed out to find springs and lands where the animals could graze.

Here is Obadiah, a servant of Ahab, a devout believer and follower of the Lord of Israel, helping the King find resources to save the animals when he encounters Elijah. Put yourself in Obadiah’s shoes – you work for one of the most sinful people in the history of the country, you love your Lord, you have taken great risks to protect those who are subject to being killed if they are found, and you encounter Elijah, whom your boss has been seeking for years.

What are you going to do? Do you help Elijah, knowing that your life is in jeopardy if you do and knowing that you will be turning your back on your Lord if you do not? Have you ever been in the position where you knew what was right, but at the same time knew that you might lose your job, or your reputation, or your life if you did what was right?

Most of us face difficult decisions all of our lives, yet we seldom have hours to reflect on what we should or should not do. How do you approach a difficult decision? Do you drop to your knees and ask for direction from God, or do you logically and rationally make the best decision you can by using a “T” chart?

Obadiah did not have much time to decide, but he decided to trust Elijah and go to Ahab and tell him that he had found Elijah. Obadiah had to make a decision based completely on his willingness to trust Elijah, for he knew if he told Ahab about Elijah and Elijah did not show, he would be killed. Elijah said “As the Lord Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today.” Obadiah acted on faith and trust – he had faith in the Lord God, his Lord, and he trusted Elijah, whom he had known for years.

RESPOND

Would we be able to make the same decision? Would our faith be strong enough for us to take action based on our understanding of God’s direction for our lives? Would our trust of a friend be strong enough for us to make a life or death decision to do what we knew was right?

Even more important, would our friends and colleagues be willing to trust us? Is our faith so strong that our friends and family know we believe in God as our Lord, Jesus as our Savior and the Holy Spirit as our Guide?

Do we trust God enough so that we rely on Him to direct our ways? Are we prepared to serve Him with all of our hearts, minds and spirits?

- G.E.

READ

I Kings 18:16-45

Psalm 99

REFLECT

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

When Ahab saw Elijah he said, “Is that you, you troublemaker of Israel?”

Elijah responded by telling Ahab that it was his father’s family that had abandoned Israel and the Lord’s commands and followed Baal. Then Elijah told Ahab to summon all the people of the kingdom, the 450 prophets of Baal and the 450 prophets of Asherah, to meet Elijah on Mount Carmel. King Ahab does so without questioning Elijah’s authority to make such a request.

Thus begins one of the most interesting demonstrations of the faith of a prophet and the responding power of God. Elijah gives very specific instructions to the people which will make it impossible for the people to deny the existence and power of the God of Israel. Note how carefully everything is done so that every opportunity and advantage for success is given to the prophets of Baal and Asherah.

Have you ever been in a situation where you knew your team, your product, or your staff was clearly able to out-perform your opponent? Did you give your opponent every opportunity to defeat you or did you make sure that the ground was equal so both sides were even? Elijah makes sure that the people of Israel can see for their own eyes that he had not cheated, had not taken advantage of a situation and had, in fact, loaded the deck against himself. How much sweeter is the victory when you start as the underdog and still succeed! Now, we know that God was not the underdog, but the people of Israel had forgotten their Lord and needed to see His power first hand.

The prophets of Baal and Asherah get to select their own bull, set up their own altar, prepare their own fire and prepare everything to their advantage – the only thing that Elijah would not let them do was light the fire – they needed Baal to start the fire. The prophets of Baal and Asherah began their chant to get their god Baal to light the fire, they danced, they sang, they shouted, they slashed themselves with swords until the blood flowed, but there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

Notice how Elijah got the people involved: they were close at hand when Elijah rebuilt the altar, cut up the bull, stacked the wood and dug a trench. To add to the challenge, he had them pour four buckets of water over the bull and the fire pile three times. Then Elijah prayed that the people would know that God was the Lord of Israel and that this was being done so that the people would return to Him.

The fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil and the water in the trench. The people responded by falling prostrate saying “The Lord – He is God! The Lord – He is God!”

RESPOND

What does it take for us to see God? Do we look for God in everything we do, everywhere we travel, or do we just live life as if God did not care about us? We are not accustomed to having altars for sacrifices and fire to consume our offerings but we do have the opportunity to decide if we will be faithful believers in the God of Israel, our Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

May God be as real to you as He was to Elijah so that you look to Him in everything you do and say so that He may be glorified.

- G.E.

READ

I Kings 19

Psalms 100

REFLECT

We see a different Elijah today than we have witnessed all week. Today we see Elijah fleeing for his life, afraid of Jezebel and ready to call it quits. Here we have a man of God who has lived alone in the mountains being fed by the ravens, stayed in the home of a widow where the flour jar was never empty and the oil jug was never dry, who strengthened Obadiah to confront Ahab, confronted the 450 prophets of Baal and the 450 prophets of Asherah and called upon the Lord to light a fire that was saturated with water.

Elijah saw the 900 prophets of Baal and Asherah slain, he waited for the rain and then he ran ahead of the King's chariot to Jezreel with the Lord's rain chasing them.

When Ahab returned to Jezreel, he told Jezebel, his wife, all that had happened and she immediately sent a messenger to Elijah with a promise to have him slain like the prophets of Baal and Asherah.

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.

Elijah traveled a day's journey into the desert before he came to a broom tree where he stopped to pray that the "Lord take my life." Then he lay down and went to sleep. He was awakened by an angel who provided food and drink. He lay down and went back to sleep. He was awakened a second time by an angel so that he might eat and drink for his continuing journey. Strengthened by the food, he traveled 40 days and 40 nights to a cave at Mt Horeb, where he slept.

In the morning the word of the Lord came to him and said "What are

you doing here, Elijah?" Elijah summarized the last several days and concluded with "and now they are trying to kill me too." This happened twice and on the second time the Lord whispered to Elijah "Go back..." Elijah was commanded to anoint two kings and Elisha as his successor. So Elijah did as he was commanded by the Lord – he anointed Hazael king over Aram, and Jehu king over Israel and Elisha to succeed himself as a prophet.

RESPOND

When was the last time you tried to run from the Lord? Have you ever had a time when you felt that the only solution was to get out of the way? Have you ever been afraid for your life? How have you handled each of these life experiences, by running, by prayerfully seeking a decision, doing a full analysis of the options, or by ignoring the problem hoping that it would go away?

Most of us have done all of the above at one time or other in our lives, but hopefully we are learning to rely on and trust the Lord to provide us with solutions in each situation we face. Over the last several months I have had the privilege of seeing some of the members and friends of Glenkirk in some really difficult and decisive situations. Most of the time it is abundantly clear to me that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and know that when you seek His help you can count on His presence, His comfort and His guidance.

Most of the time we remember that when two or more are gathered together is His name, He is with us. When we take the time to listen we know He is there right in the midst of everything we are doing, just as the Lord of Israel was with Elijah every step of the way.

- George Eastman