

Elijah's Life Before He Confronts Ahab

The recent article titled "A Journey into Nothingness" prompted me to again consider what Elijah's life must have been like as God prepared him for his appearing in Israel. Elijah's dramatic appearance before Ahab bursts on the pages of scripture in 1Kings 17:1. Almost nothing is revealed in scripture about Elijah before this moment. We do have some background in 1Kings 16:29-33. Ahab, son of Omri, is ruling in the northern kingdom of Israel. He is a wicked king in a line of wicked kings that have lead Israel further and further away from Yahweh. Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all the kings before him. He married a pagan priestess. Instituted Baal worship at the center of the nation, built an altar and temple to Baal in Samaria. We can only imagine the cultural conditions and ungodly influence over all inhabitants in the land in those days. But by Elijah's appearance we also know Yahweh was working to confront this backsliding condition.

Elijah was born and raised in this time of backsliding. The fact that the scriptures say nothing about him in his early life may just be the point God wants to emphasize. He was a nobody from nowhere. Just as was pointed out in the article, Yahweh's work in our lives brings us to nothingness in our selves. Not until that work is accomplished will powerful words and mighty exploits be released.

As we look at the first verse of 1Kings 17 small clues are given into the circumstances and levels of Elijah's growth and readiness. His place of origin is revealed. Tishbe (captivity) in Gilead (rocky or strong). His life was captive, restrained, humble. He lived across the Jordan in a land suited for cattle. This rural setting in a lesser tribe was not the place one would expect a calling of this magnitude. As he grew in his relationship with Yahweh he must of despaired many times of ever making any difference in the world. This rocky place pressed him, becoming ever weaker and less confident until the work was done.

His knowledge and relationship with the Lord are revealed in the powerful word he gives to Ahab. "As Yahweh (he knew and used the covenant name), God of Israel (Yahweh not Baal is Israel's sovereign) lives (his God is a living God, not wooden images), before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

Let's examine the last part of the verse a little more closely. "Before whom I stand." This reveals his level of maturity and relationship with the God of Israel. To stand before God is a process of growth up through other levels. Those levels are: (1) prostration-coming down on our face before Him. A worship that acknowledges our need, and a submission to His provision. It is where we start in our relationship. Face in the dust, helpless as a baby and full of thanksgiving that he has taken away our sin. (2) kneeling-this is the intercession and warfare realm. Prayers lifted to him, learning to trust him as the answers come, fighting against and overcoming the wicked one. Lifting holy hands in worship and beginning to seek his face. (3) sitting-this is the level of finding and living in the rest(sabbath) of God. A level of maturity where we recognize his sovereignty. Knowing Him who is from the beginning. Ceasing from our on works and entering into his. With an unveiled face beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord and being transformed into his image. (4) standing- this is the resting but ready level. A place of boldness and liberty. Liberty to actually stand in His presence and look upon him with an attitude of expectancy and confidence. Purged of doubt and unworthiness. A conscience cleansed from dead works ready to serve the living God. Not anxious but focused. Knowing that if he speaks no matter how impossible it may seem it will come to pass. This is where Elijah had come. Yahweh said go speak to Ahab. He left not knowing how God would open the door. Fear and doubt under his feet. And when the moment came proclaimed, "there shall be no dew nor rain these years, except at my word." Yahweh's word had become Elijah's word. There is still another level (5) walking with God- Elijah didn't reach this level until after his encounter with God at Horeb, the mountain of God where he had fled from Jezebel to the cave. The rest of his life was a daily moving from place to place fulfilling the will of God as it was made known to him. When Elisha was called and wanted to follow Elijah, he asked wait here while I go kiss my father and mother and I will follow you. Elijah's response, "What do I have to do with you." Elijah was not in the disciple making business. He was walking with Yahweh.

Let us draw encouragement on our journey into nothingness, for without this journey there will be no Elijah or Elijah company.