

# Shadows Of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #39

Elijah: Crushed By Spirit of Jezebel

October 16, 2024

There is an ancient war between the spirit of Elijah and the spirit of Jezebel.

Elijah represents the interests of Heaven; A call to repentance and a return to God.

Luke 1:17 It is he [John the Baptist] who will go as a *forerunner* before Him [Jesus Christ] in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous [which is to seek and submit to the will of God]— in order to make ready a people [perfectly] prepared [spiritually and morally] for the Lord."

Jezebel represents the unique principality whose purpose is to hinder and defeat the work of repentance. One trait is her obsessive passion for domineering and controlling others, especially in the spiritual realm. Another trait is her single-minded determination to have one's way, no matter who is destroyed in the process.

These adversaries are the spiritual counterpart of one another.

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| 1. Elijah is BOLD.                          | Jezebel is BRAZEN.                               |
| 2. Elijah is ruthless toward evil.          | Jezebel is vicious toward righteousness.         |
| 3. Elijah speaks of the way & words of God. | Jezebel is full of witchcraft & words of deceit. |

Look for these in the lesson:

Unrealized Expectations	Unrealistic Expectations	Lose Focus	
Turn to My Own Strategies	Discouragement	Self-pity	Despair
Doubt	Unbelief	Crushed in Spirit	

Do we see this same conflict in the NT? Consider: The "spirit of Elijah" was activating and creating in John the Baptist the same kind of intensity which dwelt in Elijah himself.

Luke 1:15-17 John the Baptist was to go as a forerunner before the Lord. "He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah." In Matt. 11:14, Jesus said of John the Baptist, he himself is Elijah who is to come. The "spirit of Elijah" was sent into the world.

- Like Elijah, John proclaimed the need for repentance wherever he saw sin.
- Like Elijah, John had a message of judgment for the apostate nation of Israel.

John the Baptist was in prison in the fortress of Machaerus because he had courageously denounced the adulterous marriage of Herod Antipas and Herodias. It seems that the Jewish leaders would have opposed Herod and sought to free John, but they did nothing.

Powerful Reminder: Unmet expectations challenge what we believe.

The spirit of Jezebel was manipulating and controlling the dark, spiritual side of Herodias. As Elijah's spirit was ministering through John, the spirit of Jezebel was working through Herodias. Jezebel hurled fear and discouragement which leads to self-doubt and confusion, against the servant of God.

John 1:29 John had declared: Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. John the Baptist, who had visibly seen the Spirit descend as a dove upon Christ, who heard God's audible voice bearing witness that Jesus was the Son of God, was now asking if Jesus truly was the Messiah, or should they look for another. [Matt. 11:3]

Powerful Reminder: When there is some kind of expectation in a person's mind and heart, a crisis of belief comes when those expectations are not met.

Consider: If I believe, why do I doubt? Disappointment & despair can cause doubt.  
Refusing to deal with my doubts can lead to a meltdown of my faith.

Jesus responds not with a direct yes or no, but with evidence of His miracles and the fulfillment of prophecies, pointing to the fact that He is indeed the promised Messiah.

Matt. 11:4-5 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: <sup>5</sup> The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Jesus' reply to John revealed both tact and tenderness.

He reminded John of the OT prophecies about the works of Messiah [Isa. 29:18-19; 35:4-6].

John had come in the spirit and power of Elijah and even Elijah had his days of discouragement!

Key Point: Verse 5 carries the idea of restoration and transformation.

Each of the miracles mentioned involves a transformation from a state of brokenness and despair to a state of wholeness and well-being.

- The healing of the blind can be seen as a symbol of spiritual blindness being healed.
- The lame walking represents the restoration of spiritual strength.
- The cleansing of lepers signifies the purification of the soul.
- The deaf hearing points to a new openness to the Word of God.
- The raising of the dead is a foreshadowing of Jesus' own resurrection & the promise of eternal life.

A strategic [perfect timing] day came when Herod gave a banquet. [Mark 6:21]

In this war between the spirits of Elijah and Jezebel, Herodias had her daughter dance before Herod, enticing out of him a promise to give whatever she asked.

At her mother's request [Jezebel's request], she demanded the head of John the Baptist.

Jezebel spirits always take the necessary time to set traps by enlisting the help of toadies, her unsuspecting husband and complicitous daughter. It was a powerful affront to God.

The demonic spirit working through a heavily scorned and angry woman brought the severed head of God's prophet to an ecstatic Herodias.

Chiasm is a literary or rhetorical device with a symmetrical structure.

It arranges things in a mirror-image pattern. A B BA

The order of words or ideas in one section gets reversed or mirrored in another section.

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

The central idea in the passage is what appears in the middle [X]—right before the earlier idea gets repeated. Chiastic patterns in the Bible are just one more example of the richness and complexity of God's inspired Word. The chiastic pattern of I Kings 19:

A. 19:1-4 Elijah flees from the world and prophetic ministry

B. 19:5-9a Elijah's renewal begins

- instructions for Elijah: "arise and eat"
- God responds to Elijah's needs with food and water, and a suggestion that he go to Horeb
- on the strength of the food Elijah travels to Horeb

C. 19:9b-10 "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

- "I have been exceedingly zealous . . ."

D. 19:11a Elijah is told "go out and stand"

E. 19:11b-12 *God passes by*

D<sup>1</sup>. 19:13a Elijah goes out and stands

C<sup>1</sup>. 19:13b-14 "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

- "I have been exceedingly zealous . . ."

B<sup>1</sup>. 19:15-18 Elijah's renewal is completed

- instructions for Elijah: "go and return"
- God responds to Elijah's needs with a new commission and reassurance
- God tells Elijah to leave Horeb

A<sup>1</sup>. 19:19-21 Elijah returns to the world and to prophetic ministry

Elijah is so afraid and discouraged that he flees from the world and his prophetic ministry and wishes to die. By the last section (A<sup>1</sup>) Elijah has been re-energized and has returned to the world and his ministry. Comparing these two sections reveals the enormous change which has come over Elijah and indicates that the focus of the story is the renewal of a fearful and burned-out prophet. How God brings about this renewal is the concern of the intervening sections.

In chiastic passages the theologically most important material often stands in the center.

So, it is not surprising that God arrives on the scene in the center of this story [19:11b-12].

## Background for I Kings 19:

- God had chastened His people with drought and famine but had cared for His special servant Elijah.
- Elijah had witnessed God's supply by the brook and in the home of the widow.

During Jezebel's relentless persecutions, the 7,000 of Israel who did not worship Baal had to flee to the mountains and hide in the caves of the earth.

- Jezebel was swift to shed the blood of the prophets of God.
- Her strongest enemy was Elijah who challenged the 850 prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth to a supreme test of power on the top of Mount Carmel. These prophets who ate at Jezebel's table were satanic priests who were the most powerful, demonized individuals the hosts of darkness could produce.

God sent fire from heaven & consumed the sacrifice to prove that He was the true & living God.

- The contest ended in the triumphant vindication of Jehovah.
- The people seized the priests of Baal and massacred them.

Elijah was a powerful man of God who brought fire down from heaven with his command. He seemed fearless.

- God gave Elijah the ability to outrun Ahab back to Jezreel.

God had answered the prayer of His prophet and had sent the rains to water the land.

You would think that Elijah would be at his very best spiritually and able to face anything, but I Kings 19 records just the opposite.

As great a man as Elijah was, he still failed the Lord and himself.

- "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."

Warning: When you war against the spirit of Jezebel you must guard against the power-demons of fear and discouragement she sends to distract you from your warfare and victory!

### A. 19:1-4      Elijah flees from the world and prophetic ministry

I Kings 19:1 And Ahab told Jezebel [devout priestess of Baal] all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword.

Despite hearing of the miraculous powers of Jehovah, Jezebel refused to repent and swore she would relentlessly pursue Elijah and take his life.

19:2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."

Powerful Reminder: Spiritual warfare and the struggle between good and evil

Jezebel represents the forces of darkness, seeking to destroy God's prophet and suppress the message of truth.

Why did Jezebel send a messenger to Elijah when she could have sent soldiers and had him killed? He was in Jezreel and the deed could have been easily accomplished on such a wild and stormy night. Jezebel wasn't only an evil woman; she was also a shrewd strategist who knew how to make the most of Baal's defeat on Mount Carmel. Elijah was now a very popular man.

Like Moses, he had brought fire from heaven, and like Moses, he had slain the idolaters.

If Jezebel transformed the prophet into a martyr, he might influence people more by his death than by his life. The people were waiting for Elijah to tell them what to do, so why not remove him from the scene of his victory? If Elijah disappeared, the people would wonder what had happened, and they would be prone to drift back into worshipping Baal and letting Ahab and Jezebel have their way.

Though Elijah had killed all the demon-possessed prophets of Baal, the most powerful demon remained and was determined to get him. He came under spiritual warfare. Jezebel, in a fit of rage, released a flood of witchcraft and demonic power against Elijah that put fear into his heart. She didn't kill Elijah: she simply sent a messenger to discourage him & make him run in fear of his life. It worked!

I Kings 19:3 And when he saw that, he arose, and ran for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah and left his servant there. [from Jezreel ~100 miles]  
For three years, Elijah had not made a move without hearing and obeying the Lord's instructions [17:2-3, 8-9; 18:1], but now he was running ahead of the Lord in order to save his own life.

Unmet Expectations: My ministry is a failure. What was God's purpose for Elijah?  
Spirit and Power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous [which is to seek and submit to the will of God]—in order to make ready a people [perfectly] prepared [spiritually and morally] for the Lord.

It became obvious there would be no immediate revival in the land. He is fearful and discouraged. Elijah ran and tried to hide. Elijah "retreated before a beaten enemy."

James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours,

Powerful Truth: The safest place for any child of God is the place dictated by the will of God, but Elijah didn't stop to seek God's will. [walking by sight; not faith]

Powerful Truth: When God's servants get out of God's will, they're liable to do all sorts of foolish things and fail in their strongest points.

Gen. 12: When Abraham fled to Egypt, he failed in his faith, which was his greatest strength

II Sam. 11-12 David's greatest strength was his integrity.

He failed when he started lying and scheming during the Bathsheba episode.

Num. 12:3 Moses was the meekest of men, yet he lost his temper and forfeited the privilege of entering the Promised Land [Num. 20:1-13].

Mark 14:66-72 Peter was a courageous man, yet his courage failed, and he denied Christ.

Like Peter, Elijah was a bold man, but his courage failed when he heard Jezebel's message.

- Reflects the very real emotions of fear and anxiety
- Reflects the real struggle of faith and doubt

Despite witnessing the miraculous power of God, Elijah found himself in a place of deep doubt and vulnerability.

- Beersheba: place of refuge, safety, & comfort  
desire for safety & security in the face of danger.
- The act of leaving his servant behind speaks to the profound sense of isolation and burden that can weigh heavily on individuals, even those called by God.

Powerful Reminder: Even the most faithful and dedicated individuals can experience moments of weakness and fear.

Symbolically, Elijah's journey to Beersheba can be seen as a journey of the soul. Just as Elijah sought refuge and safety in Beersheba, we too seek comfort and solace in times of turmoil.

### *Crushed in His Spirit*

I Kings 19:4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree; and he asked for himself to die, and said, "Enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers."

Elijah is bemoaning his discouragement at his lack of success in encouraging the Israelites to be faithful.

Consider: This is a man who has been following the Lord, performing miracles in His name, and relaying the literal words of God for years. Elijah had stood alone for God.

Elijah had bravely issued a provocative challenge to the people of Israel:

I Kings 18:21 How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Elijah had endured many hardships. The emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical issues had taken their toll on him. Elijah had watched his people reject the Lord time and time again.

He had witnessed his fellow prophets be put to death.

He had spent a good deal of his ministry on the run and hiding in the wilderness.

He had experienced all of this while doing what he believed the Lord had called him to do.

Perhaps he had begun to view his ministry as a failure. Perhaps he doubted that the Lord would continue to protect him or use him. Perhaps he questioned if the Lord had really called him to this ministry. How exhausted and discouraged Elijah must have felt when he collapsed beneath that bush. The image of him begging the Lord to make it all stop made a lot more sense.

Elijah's depression is the result of a "perfect storm."

The combination of emotional burnout, weariness, hunger, and a deep sense of failure, plus lack of faith in the Lord, had brought Elijah into deep depression.

Powerful Reminder: Our experiences of despair and disappointment are often accompanied by self-pity.

Consider: Why am I so discouraged? My focus has moved from God to my circumstances.

When my focus inevitably shifts from God and His provision to myself and my insufficiency.

### *Unrealistic Expectations*

Elijah's failure and discouragement because of his expectations were due in part to 3 things.

1. Elijah probably *expected* the dramatic victory on Mt. Carmel would result in Ahab's and Jezebel's repentance or judgment [even though God never promised this].

It is easy to get in trouble by letting legitimate spiritual desires turn into expectations that go beyond what God actually promises. This happens most often by expecting that key people in our lives will make good decisions about God.

Of course, we desire that they do this, and we pray to this end. But God has never promised that our desires or prayers (or even God himself) will overturn people's free will.

Powerful Truth: When we base our emotional security on people's choices rather than God's faithfulness, the result is serious depression.

2. His view of what it would take to change the nation. His God-given successes had made him take his own importance too seriously [19:4, 9, 14].

There were elements of pride and self-pity involved. Elijah was sure his courageous ministry on Mt. Carmel would bring the nation to its knees. Perhaps he was also hoping that Ahab and Jezebel would repent and turn from Baal to Jehovah.

3. He thought the primary means of reaching the people was the display of God's power in dramatic and spectacular ways.

He thought if they didn't respond to that, there was no hope.

When he failed to see the results he expected, he was shattered.

Powerful Truth: How we often set ourselves up for discouragement by our pride and our expectations which we fail to rest on the foundation of God's wisdom.

Many, but not all, forms of depression are ultimately spiritual. We were never designed to live life without humbly depending on God. The root of our spiritual depression may be pride: our self-sufficiency and independence. Learning humility can prevent and/or mitigate much depression. You can begin this way of life by laying down your autonomy from God and asking His forgiveness through his Son Jesus.

Powerful Reminder: The Lord rarely allows His servants to see all the good they have done.

We walk by faith and not by sight. Elijah would later learn that there were 7,000 people in Israel who had not bowed to Baal and worshipped him.

No doubt his own ministry had influenced many of them.

## B. 19:5-9a Elijah's renewal begins

- instructions for Elijah: "arise and eat"

The Lord wasn't through with Elijah. His failure doesn't mean defeat or an end to a ministry.

I Kings 19:5a The Provision of Sleep: And as he lay and slept under a broom tree...

The Hebrew word for this tree or bush is *rothem*. It had long slender branches with small leaves and provided very poor shade or protection from the sun.

Powerful Reminder: That is how it goes with our man-made solutions from which we seek shelter, refuge or solutions to our pain.

God has ordained sleep and rest as necessary for our survival and ability to function, so the Lord allowed a time of sleep before He brought on the next phase of His provision for Elijah.

God knows our frame, that we are but dust. [Ps. 103:14] He is mindful that we possess material bodies that must be cared for, often, before the spiritual part can function.

Powerful Reminder: We serve a God of love and compassion, a God who is attentive to the groans of our hearts.

### The Provision of an Angel: Time & Place of God's Provision

I Kings. 19:5b-6 Behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink and laid him down again.

Note: "*Behold*" is used 5x to highlight an important fact or truth of God's dealings with the prophet [19:5, 6, 9, 11, 13]. Against the backdrop of Elijah's failure, this little demonstrative particle highlights God's gracious work to restore the prophet back to his ministry regardless of what he had done.

This highlights the place and time when God's angel, His messenger of mercy, comes on the scene. What's the Lord pointing out to us in this picture? This special work of God's grace did not occur on the summit of Mount Carmel, nor when in conflict with the prophets of Baal, nor by the brook where the Lord had sent Elijah, nor when he was in prayer and intimate fellowship. It occurred when he was in the wilderness, when Elijah was out of fellowship. It was when he was depressed and a deserter with the best his own strategies could supply--a scrubby desert bush.