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What Are You Doing Here, Elijah?

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Series: Living Legends - Part 3

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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What Are You Doing Here, Elijah?

We have been looking at the life of one of the greatest prophets ever anointed by the Living God. His name is Elijah. We have seen him stand before kings, wait before ravens, pray over a widow's boy, and dare to challenge the entire satanic host of hell to a face-to-face confrontation with the Living God.

We watched as his God delivered fire from heaven, and we watched as he, in obedience to his God, single-handedly killed 450 prophets of the demonic host with the sword. Then, lastly, we watched as this man of courage and intensity bowed before God once again atop Mount Carmel and lovingly asked his Father to make it rain again. And, of course, He did.

Finally, we watched, almost in disbelief, as, in his moment of triumph, exhausted and exalted, he received a death threat from the wicked Queen Jezebel, the woman whose gods had been totally helpless before him just hours before. But instead of standing on God's Word once more, our man Elijah, paranoid with fear and discouragement, runs for the wilderness, distraught and afraid. In a matter of hours, the bravest man on planet earth has become paralyzed with faithlessness at the word of one angry woman.

He runs to Beersheba, tells his servant to wait there, and goes a day's journey further into the wilderness, where he finds himself under a juniper tree, asking God to let him die. It is while he is resting there that God catches up to his fleeing prophet. He sends an angel to awaken him, to feed him, and to equip him for a forty-day journey to Mount Horeb to visit with God, heart to heart. That is where we are in the life of the Living Legend of Elijah. He has tasted the heights; now, he is tasting the depths. He has stood alone before the king, prayed alone in an upper room for a dying boy, confronted the enemy alone on a mountaintop, and prayed alone for the rains to return. Perhaps that word "alone" is significant. Elijah, apparently, was a loner. But at this point in his life, he might have done better had he had a friend.

Today's story takes up where we left off in our last lesson.

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Elijah has been wakened from his slumber under that juniper tree, and given nourishment for the journey to the Mountain of God. Now we shall see what happens when our once mighty man, defeated and dejected, hears the Voice of the Living God once more.

The title for today's study will be: What Are You Doing Here, Elijah? Our outline will take this form:

- I- Forty Days to the Mountain (I Kings 19:8)
- II- What Are You Doing Here, Elijah? (I Kings 19:9)
- III- A Pre-recorded Announcement (I Kings 19: 10)
- IV- Once More on a Mountaintop (I Kings 19:11-14)
- V- Final Instructions (I Kings 19:15-21)

I- FORTY DAYS TO THE MOUNTAIN

The next few days in our prophet's life appear to be potentially dull. Like those hours spent by that drying brook, and like those days so long in a widow's upper room, Elijah now embarks on an apparently uneventful forty-day journey into the wilderness to Mount Horeb, the Mountain of God.

But unlike his experiences in that upper room or by that drying brook, God did not feed Elijah miraculously each day. He saw to it that he had enough to exist before he left, then left him to fast for the entire journey. Day after day, the prophet walked, once more alone. No doubt his frustrations were magnified during the course of that journey. His responses at the end of the trip indicate that he has nursed his self-pity and cursed his circumstances the whole way.

So instead of anxiously awaiting a meeting with God, to be refreshed and renewed, Elijah was preparing a speech to tell God just how bad things were, and how good he'd been. It's the kind of speech God hates to listen to. He's heard it from me. He's probably heard it from you. But it breaks His precious heart.

This was not the first long journey for Elijah, nor was it his first to a mountaintop. But it was his longest; because when you are out of the will of God, every step is heavy. Every ill-wind that blows is a catastrophe. Every ray of the scorching sun is construed to be an unfair addition to an already troubled soul. Nonetheless, he carried on. Like a martyr, trudging to his trial, Elijah moved toward his date with Jehovah. Finally, more than a month later,

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he arrives at his destination. But instead of journeying to the sunlight, he hides in a cave. And it is there that God finds him, again.

So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Then he came there to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

(I Kings, 19:8,9 NASB)

II- WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, ELIJAH?

What are you doing here, Elijah? What a tragic question. A whole glorious world beckoned to our hero. But here he was, quivering with fright in the blackened hole of a dirty cave. An encounter with the Living God awaited our man atop the glory of Mount Horeb. But here he was in the depths of self-pity, still wanting to wallow in fear at the threats of one irate, angry woman.

So God simply had to ask the question. "*What are you doing here, Elijah?* Why aren't you out there encouraging the flock? Why aren't you down there rebuilding the nation? Why aren't you over there instructing the king on how to walk with God? What are you doing here, Elijah? What are you doing, here?"

III- A PRE-RECORDED ANNOUNCEMENT

It is at this point that Elijah's heart should have broken. It is here that the prophet, under the gentle rebuke of the questioning hand of God, should have realized how strange it was for the man responsible for the restoration of God's authority before the whole nation to be hiding in a cave, fearing for his life.

Elijah should have fallen to his knees in repentance and asked God's forgiveness and begun the process of worshipping and praising God for what He had done, quietly laying himself at God's feet for his next instructions. But instead, Elijah takes out a pre-recorded cassette and plugs it into his "boom box" and plays it for God. Listen:

And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of Hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

(I Kings, 19:10 NASB)

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Elijah begins with a paid political announcement nominating himself for martyr of the year. As if God, who had planned his every step, controlled his every circumstance, and provided for his every meal, didn't know how faithful he'd been, Elijah sings a stanza or two of "How Great I Art". Then, having commended himself, he compares himself with the rest of the Jews, *all of whom, according to the prophet, have forsaken the covenant, torn down the altars and killed the prophets*. Then our hero straightens his halo and reminds this omniscient God that he's the only faithful chap left in the army, and it's only a matter of hours before "they" who seek his life, take it from him.

In other words, "God, you're fighting a lost cause. I'm all you have left, and they're about to roast me for breakfast. I guess it's all over, Lord; You lost."

Now that's a strange speech to come from the lips of a man who has just stood before an entire nation, including the whole host of heathen priests and watched God defend His name and decimate their idolatry. Just days ago, an entire nation was on its knees crying, "The Lord, He is God." and today Elijah is digging his grave and burying God with him.

But the heart of man works that way. Like a pendulum it swings to extremes, depending on the depth of the circumstances that engulf it. Elijah, remember, was a man with the same kinds of problems we have. And one of those problems is a short memory. We forget today what God did yesterday. We forget what life was like before we met Christ. We forget the promises God made, if they aren't fulfilled according to *our* time frame. We can't live with the kinds of promises God made to Abraham that take forty years or so to answer. We want instant everything, and if God doesn't give it, we dissolve into a deep depression and blame God for not keeping His Word. Elijah's memory was short indeed. It has been less than two months since our hero saw God perform one of the greatest miracles recorded in history. Now he views God as helpless and powerless, caught up in a hopeless sea of circumstances, in bondage to the whims of a heathen queen.

No doubt Elijah had been practicing his message for forty days. It was the kind of automatic response that justifies self, and condemns others, that you only pour out to God when you've rehearsed it so long it becomes a memorized spiel.

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IV- ONCE MORE ON A MOUNTAINTOP

So Elijah has given his little speech to God. God does not bother to answer. He chooses instead, to reveal Himself once more to remind Elijah, just who He is.

So He said, "Go forth, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing.

And it came about when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Then he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of Hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."
(I Kings, 19:11-14 NASB)

In one of the most moving passages in all of God's Word, God demonstrates just how intensely He wants his children to know who He is. Elijah was running. He was running from himself. He was tired, discouraged, and felt desperately alone. And so God appeared to him and allowed him to see a small portion of His majesty, His glory, and His power.

What a blessed, personal act of love on God's part! First, He demonstrated the power of His Spirit. A mighty wind rocked the mountain. Rocks were flying. The mountain itself was literally breaking in pieces. But God did not speak through that mighty wind. It passed by, demonstrating the awesomeness of its power, and then...silence.

A moment or two passed, and then, suddenly, the ground beneath Elijah's feet began to shake. What it was on the "Richter scale", we don't know, but, Beloved, when God says there was an earthquake, it wasn't a tremor. The earth shook and shook and shook. But still, God said nothing. Suddenly, Elijah looked around, and it was as though the entire mountain was aflame! Surely, it must have momentarily taken him back to that night atop Mount Carmel when God declared Himself to Be God, by

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sending fire from heaven. The flames must have risen higher than Elijah could see; but in a moment or two, it was as though a giant fire extinguisher had descended and there was no sign of a fire. But still, God said nothing.

Do you see what God was doing? He was lovingly reminding His man that *there was nothing He could not do*. He is I AM. Before ever the hills were formed, I AM is. At the touch of His breath, the mountains tremble. At the sound of His voice, the earth shatters and breaks beneath our feet. At even a whisper of His voice, flames of fire engulf the earth. Oh, Elijah, before you justify yourself before a Holy God, remember Who HE Is! He is I AM! Don't tell God how *zealous you've* been. Don't tell God how *unfaithful others are*. Don't tell God how ruthless Jezebel is. Before Almighty God, you, they, and she are as nothing. You are a vapor, which today is, and tomorrow has vanished into the atmosphere. But HE is I AM. He always has been. He ever is. He always will be...King of Kings; Lord of Lords. He does not need a sermon from you. What He needs from you...is worship. So, Elijah, if you get the chance again to speak to Him, throw yourself at His precious feet, and praise Him. Humble yourself and adore Him. Repent in sackcloth and ashes and beseech Him to use you again. He is I AM, Elijah. He need say nothing more.

Now, having demonstrated His power and His righteousness and His love, God speaks to the prophet one more time. Elijah finally heard the sound of a gentle breeze blowing, a still small voice, if you will; and it was the voice of the Living God. Oh, Elijah, don't you see? He moves mountains with the blink of an eye, sends the earth shaking, with the movement of His finger; *but if you really want to know Him, listen to that still small voice that speaks to you when the wind has died, and the quake has ceased, and the fire has turned to embers.*

What would you have expected God to say to Elijah now? I would have expected God to chastise his hero soundly, wouldn't you? But what did God say? He said,

“What are you doing here, Elijah?”

Having seen God's power afresh and anew, Elijah was given one more opportunity to answer the question honestly. All God was waiting for was for Elijah to say:

“Lord, I'll tell you what I'm doing here. I'm running like a coward. I momentarily forgot *Who You are*. Please forgive me.

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You've cared for me by drying brooks, cared for me in widow's houses, cared for me in conflict with the very armies of hell at my doorstep. But, Lord, I was so tired, I took my eyes off you, and when Jezebel threatened me, I panicked and ran. Lord, please forgive me. Now I know, once again, that you are I AM, and that *nothing is too hard for Thee.*"

Instead, Elijah rewound his cassette player, and replayed the same self-centered prayer he had used to insult God before. He said, "I have been very zealous for you, Lord. I just may be the best thing that ever happened to you. Look around you, Lord. I'm all you've got left. Everyone else has forsaken your Word, abandoned your temple, and murdered your preachers. I'm the only good guy in the kingdom. And now, my days are numbered. Oh, woe is you, God. Oh, woe is you."

Once again, God did not bother to answer Elijah. When His children get to the stage where Elijah was; so wrapped up in themselves and their circumstances that they cannot even see God as He reveals Himself to them, He will simply quietly choose a replacement for them, for the work must go on. So with a grieved and broken heart, God overlooks the taped recording, and gives this prophet who occupied such a special place in His heart, his final instructions. He gives him step by step orders concerning how to wrap up his affairs.

V- FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Those final instructions are found in verses 15-21. We will see them unfold in our next lesson. Listen, as God speaks one more time to His special man:

And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram (Syria).

And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.

And it shall come about, the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall put to death.

Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."

(I Kings, 19:15-18 NASB)

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Two things immediately stand out as God gives His pouting prophet marching orders.

1- God was still on His throne. He was still totally in control of the situation. He already had replacements chosen, and no one who had defied or defiled the Name of God would escape the judgment. He had a new king for Syria, a new king for Israel, and a new prophet to fill Elijah's shoes. God hadn't lost control of the destiny of His people. Elijah had just lost control of God's perspective.

2- Elijah's arithmetic was just a little off. He assumed that God only had one soldier left in uniform. And he just knew that once Jezzie got her hands on that one, God would be a commander-in-chief without an army. God lovingly corrects him. There were 7,001 disciples still marching to the drumbeat of eternity; 7,001 who had never bowed the knee to Baal. Oh, the exclusiveness that accompanies spiritual pride.

Beloved, we're not all God's got going for Himself on planet earth. He has thousands whose knees have never bowed to the enemy. Thousands whose every heartbeat says "Jesus". No, they may not speak our language; they may not even understand our spiritual jargon. But they know HIM! And in Heaven, gathered around the throne, will be millions of men and women we never even knew existed, singing and praising, and naming the Name that is above every Name. God's still in control; and we're not the only game in town. Elijah missed God's best the minute he began to assume that God's best was Elijah.

But, oh, what a wonderful God Elijah has. He wasn't through using His man, but the end was in sight. Because Elijah was too old to be used? No, he was only six weeks older than he was at the height of his career. The end was in sight for Elijah, because he had lost sight of who God was; therefore, he had lost sight of who he was. And when we do that, Beloved, be it a church or a ministry or a man, God begins looking for others to wear the mantle and bear the burden assigned to us.

You say, well let's don't have a "roast Elijah" lesson. I agree. The very way this man's life ends is a tribute to the fact that God has a special place in His heart marked "Elijah's room". Let's don't overlook either the man or the miracles because of how the story ends. But let's do try to learn a lesson or two from the latter stages of our legend's life. Let's try to look into the mirror

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of God's Word and see ourselves where it applies. I think at least four truths cry out for recognition. They are:

1- Don't try to go it alone. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes that "Two are better than one... For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up." (Ecclesiastes 4:9,10). Elijah tried to go it alone. And as long as he was in control of the ship, it didn't matter. But when the ship drifted off course, and his oars fell in the water of despair, there was no one alongside to point him back to shore. Every believer needs at least one friend, a Jonathan, to share his heart with. And he needs to be willing, when the sky starts falling, to let God minister to him through that friend.

2- When you're tired and weary, sit still. The last thing you ought to do is try to discern the will of God from the oven of exhaustion. And the last thing you ought to do when you don't know what to do, is run. If ever there was a principle in Scripture that repeats itself o'er and o'er, it's this: *when you don't know what to do, don't move.*

3- When you begin feeling sorry for yourself, and find yourself telling God about yourself, look out. You're headed for trouble. God already knows how great you are. The question is, do you remember how great God is?

4- And finally, whenever you find yourself filled with self-pity, it's time to get out your book of remembrance and review the things your God has done. Then get out your Bible and review just who He is. And finally, fall to your knees and worship. That's the cure for self-pity, you know. Worship.

Our man Elijah was a guy pretty much like us. He loved his God, and served his God as few men before or since have. But one day, somewhere along the way, he began to see himself as a necessary cog in God's scheme of things; so when his life became threatened, he lost all sense of reality, and his world crumbled into pieces.

But a loving God pursued him and touched him and manifested Himself to him, and gently whispered in his ear: "*What are you doing here, Elijah? What are you doing here?*"

Maybe you have identified with Elijah today. Maybe it hasn't been long since you were in the center of God's will, seeing His power manifested on a daily basis, sensing His provisions even

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in the midst of life's drying brooks. And maybe you began to be recognized as somebody special in the church, or as a budding genius in the spirit realm. Or maybe you "served" and "served" until you gave out more than you took in; and you fell, exhausted into the waiting arms of one of Satan's lies.

I believe if Elijah were here today speaking to us, he would lovingly say, "What are you doing here, Beloved?" How did you fall from humility and usability to cynicism and selfishness? When did your world begin to revolve around you? What are you doing here, under a juniper tree, angry at God, or hidden in one of life's caves, reciting to God pre-recorded messages of bitterness and grief, when there is a world about you longing to see that man or woman who once stood on life's Mount Carmels and dared the enemy to face your God."

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, ELIJAH?

God was speaking to Elijah that day;
And His question rang forth loud and clear.
He said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?
What are you doing here?"

God is speaking through Elijah today;
And the message is ever the same...
He says, "What are you doing, here, My child...
And then He mentions your name.

He says, "Why are you running away from Me?
So encompassed with worry and fear...
You belong in My arms, just trusting Me,
So what are you doing here?"

Don't give Him your pre-recorded speech,
And tell Him how great you've been;
For at some point in time, He'll quietly grieve,
And not ask that question again!

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Suggestions for Application

1- One Biblical principle often overlooked is the value of right friendships. Do a study of the Life of Christ with the specific purpose of evaluating His close friendships. Who were His closest friends? How did He offer them support when they were down? Give examples. How did they offer Him support in times of testing?

2- Why do you think Elijah was such a loner? What kinds of personalities often “go it alone”? What benefit would the right friendship have had when Jezebel threatened to take his life?

3- What additional symbolism do you see in the episode on Mount Horeb? In the mighty wind? In the earthquake? In the fire? Why was “God’s voice” not in these things?

4- What three *attitude* problems surfaced in Elijah’s response to God? Why did God ask the same question twice?

5- How long has it been since you have made a list of the things God has done for you? How can a short memory aid Satan in his desire to destroy your faith?

6- Praise God that He is still on His Throne.

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