



GOD OF FIRE & RAIN

—THE STORY OF—
ELIJAH & GOD

5



YES, NO & MAYBE

1. I'm not as gullible as the people sitting near me.
2. I have a difficult time believing in things that I cannot literally see.
3. You still have to pray for God to fulfill His promise, or He won't give it to you.
4. When God answers our big prayers, His actions often don't look like much.
5. When you do what God wants, even kings are humbled before you.

DIG DEEPER

◊ When you were a child, what were some of the most difficult things for you to believe about God and what He could do?

› **READ 1 Kings 18:41-46** (NIV)

41 And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain." 42 So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

43 "Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked.

"There is nothing there," he said.

Seven times Elijah said, "Go back."

44 The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea."

So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'"

45 Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. 46 The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

» **41 "Go, eat and drink"** - It is extremely probable that the excitement of the ordeal was so intense that the king had barely tasted food all day long. Elijah now bids him eat if he can, after what he has witnessed.

» **41 the sound of a heavy rain** - According to the Rev. J. Roberts (Oriental Illustrations of the Sacred Scriptures, 1844), in the Middle East it is as common to say sound of rain as with us to say appearance of rain, or more colloquially, "looks like rain." The expression, "sound of rain," sometimes refers to the thunder that precedes rain, and sometimes to a blowing sound in the clouds that shows the approach of rain. He has already announced the rain to Ahab, before he prays for it.

• What are the reasons that Elijah has a level of faith that allows him to announce a "heavy rain" while there is still not a cloud in the sky?

» **42 Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees** - The Middle Eastern attitude of entire abstraction. This posture showed the intensity of his supplication. With his ears between his knees, he was blocking out what he could hear in order to hear what God wanted him to hear.

- How is it possible to block out all of the noise around us today, so that we can hear God?

» **43 “Go and look toward the sea,” he told his servant. And he went up and looked.** - It is an old tradition that this was none other than the son of the widow of Zeraphath. The peak is a semi-isolated knoll with a cliff some forty feet high, looking south east.... The sea is invisible, except from the summit, and thus it was only by climbing to the top of Carmel, from the plateau where the altar may have stood, that the prophet's servant could have seen the little cloud.

- Why do you think that Elijah was praying for something that God had already promised?

» **43 “There is nothing there.”** - Six times, the servant climbed the mount, and each time the sky was empty of any clouds.

» **43 Seven times Elijah said, “Go back.”** - The rain did not immediately fall. But Elijah's faith did not waver. He continued to pray more earnestly than before. Again and again the servant was sent, and still the heavens were empty, and the earth dry. Yet Elijah's intercession did not cease. This earnest prayer of the prophet became proverbial for intensity and perseverance in supplication (James 5:18).

« What does it say about God that He did not answer immediately. Does He always act like this?

» **44 “A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea.”** - “Hand” here is literally, *palm, hollow of hand*. . In Luke 12:54, Jesus says, ““When you see a cloud (Gr. τὴν νεφέλην) rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It's going to rain,’ and it does.”

- « What does it say about God that when He does initially answer, it doesn't look like much?

» **44 Elijah said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.’”** - Elijah did not wait for the heavens to gather blackness; he acted on the first indication that his prayer had been heard.

- « Does a little sign from God typically mean that a big answer is coming?

» **46 The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.** - With the long loose clothing that was worn it became a necessity to gather up the clothing and tuck it into the belt, for it would have been difficult to walk and impossible to run without the clothing tightened and held up out of the way of the legs. So Elijah tucked “his cloak into his belt,” in preparation for running (see also 2 Kings 4:29 and 9:1). The return of Ahab to Jezreel was at night, in a blinding rainstorm, over treacherous mountain roads. The way being difficult to see, the desert prophet ran before the king, guiding the royal chariot in safety to the gates of Jezreel. If Ahab had paid the respect to Elijah that he deserved he would have taken him into his chariot.

« What does it say about God that he would inspire Elijah to perform the duties of a servant, instead of humiliating Ahab and letting the king be humbled?

- « What does this story say about God's character?



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MY PRAYER...

1. What things do I need to hear from God that I cannot yet see?
2. How is God answering my prayers in big ways, where He seems to be not doing much?
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to know?