

ELIJAH'S RETURN AND VICTORY

– *SEPTEMBER 5. – 1 KINGS 18:16-40.* –

ELIJAH'S EXPERIENCES TYPICAL – KING AHAB AND QUEEN JEZEBEL ALSO TYPES – THREE AND A HALF YEARS' DROUGHT PREFIGURED TWELVE HUNDRED AND SIXTY YEARS OF SPIRITUAL DROUGHT – ELIJAH'S PRAYER OF FAITH BROUGHT NATURAL SHOWERS – CHURCH'S PRAYERS OF FAITH BROUGHT SPIRITUAL SHOWERS AND A GREAT REFORMATION.

OUR lesson is interesting as we find it simply recorded in the Bible, but the interest of Bible students increases from the time they learn that Elijah was not only a Prophet of the Lord, but also a type of the Church's earthly experiences. The Book of Revelation (2:20-25; 18:7) pictures to us Queen Jezebel as representing a great religious system of this Gospel Age which did great violence to the Truth. Ahab represented the worldly governments. His wife represented a false Christian Church system married to earthly governments. As Ahab represented the worldly governments claiming to be Christ's kingdoms, so Queen Jezebel pictured, or typified, a false Church system, which, instead of maintaining its purity as the virgin Church of Christ, became married or united to these earthly systems. Contrary to this, the true virgin Church of Christ was to remain faithful to her Heavenly Lord, awaiting His Second Coming; and her marriage to Him was then to be accomplished.

As the Prophets of Baal were under the care of Queen Jezebel and under the patronage of King Ahab, so the priests and the religious representatives of a great church system have been the obedient servants of the great false institutions pictured by Ahab and Jezebel. Similarly, Elijah the Prophet and his dealings

with Ahab, Jezebel and the affairs of Israel, was a type of the true Church of Christ in the flesh – this side the veil. Although the true Church is indeed represented symbolically by a woman, it is also represented sometimes by a man, when the picture includes the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.

In Revelation we have the three and a half years of Elijah's experience stated in symbolic language – forty-two months – 1,260 days – three and a half times or years. (Revelation 11:2,3; 12:6,14; 13:5.) In Revelation the time was symbolic, so that each day of the three and a half years represented a year, or the whole period 1,260 years. Some Bible scholars have applied this period as beginning in 539 A.D. and ending in 1798 A.D., at the time when Napoleon Bonaparte took the Pope of Rome prisoner to Paris.

As during Elijah's hiding in the wilderness there was no rain until he came forth, as told in today's lesson, so in the Church's experiences there was a lack of rain, a drouth spiritually, for twelve hundred and sixty years, ending in 1798.

As just before the time of drought in Israel ended, there was a great contest (related in to-day's lesson), with the victory on the side of the Lord, so in the history of the Church a great contest took place between Catholicism and Protestantism in the period styled the Reformation. In the Revelation picture the Church, symbolized by a woman, is seen driven into the wilderness – lost to the general view. The woman corresponds in the type to Elijah hidden from view to the king, the queen and the prophets of Baal – in the world, but not of it. As Elijah was fed in the wilderness by the ravens, so the account in Revelation says that the woman, the true Church, secluded from general view, was, nevertheless, spiritually fed during the twelve hundred and sixty years in which the famine for spiritual food prevailed in the world.

The Elijah class did a very courageous work after emerging from the wilderness condition. Spiritual refreshment came in abundant measure. For a time it looked as though Queen Jezebel had been vanquished, and that the slaying of her prophets with the Sword of Truth had demonstrated their errors and put the Truth of God and its servant, Elijah, the true Church, into a commanding position. However, this was not for long. Our next lesson will show us the Elijah class again fleeing from Jezebel's power.

WHY DEPRIVED OF RAIN

Many express surprise that in response to earnest Bible study the Word of God in our day is telling such a beautiful Message of Divine Wisdom, Justice, Love **[R5751 : page 253]** and Power – a Message very contrary to the teachings of the past. "How," they ask, "is it possible for Bible students of today to have so much more light on God's Word than was found by equally zealous Bible students of the past?"

We reply that the twelve hundred and sixty years of spiritual drought are the explanation. About the year 300 A.D., Christian bishops began to claim Apostolic powers and to style themselves Apostolic Bishops. The claim is still made that the bishops of the Church of Rome, of the Church of England, etc., are of equal authority with the twelve Apostles, while the Bible claims to the contrary – that the twelve Apostles selected by Jesus (St. Paul taking the place of Judas) were to be the only foundations of the Christian Church, their teachings being on a full parallel with those of the Lord Jesus – they being His special mouthpieces to the Church, orally and through their epistles. Jesus prophesied the falling away which would result in some falsely claiming to be **[R5752 : page 253]** Apostles. See Rev. 2:2. Compare 2 Pet. 2:1; Acts 20:30.

This exaltation of the bishops came in gradually and was given great force by the action of Emperor Constantine in calling for a Church Council at Nice, Bithynia, 325 A.D. The Council, under the Emperor's guidance, produced the Nicene Creed as representing the faith of the people of God. Subsequently that creed was impressed upon the people as being the only proper and infallible faith. Similarly, other additions to the creed were made later on by the bishops. The indorsement of these creeds implied that the bishops who made them had the right, the authority, the Divine revelation necessary for the work; and the people gradually endorsing the creeds were really endorsing at the same time the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, which was subsequently made a feature of the creeds.

From the time the Nicene Creed was promulgated and accepted, 325 A.D., there was practically no more Bible study for over twelve centuries. During all that time Bible study was considered unnecessary, because the Apostolic Bishops had formulated the creeds as proper statements of the Church's faith. To study the Bible would have meant the studying of how to fight against the Emperor and the combined views and teachings of the bishops. Besides, Bibles, then written on parchment, were worth a fortune and possessed by few; and education necessary for reading was extremely limited.

REVIVAL OF BIBLE STUDY

Twelve hundred years after the first expression by the so-called Apostolic Bishops brings us to 1526, when the art of printing had become common. In that year Prof. Tyndale, having prepared his MS., published it in Germany, because of the opposition of the English clergy. He imported his New Testaments into London, in whose shops the people began to purchase them. Few were able to read; but many were glad to organize classes and to hire a reader, that they might know the

Word of God. At this same time the Germans were learning something of the New Testament and its different teachings, from Luther and his associates.

The Church of England bishops had heard about this New Testament. They forthwith bought up the entire edition in the shops, and publicly burnt them in front of St. Paul's Cathedral, London. They feared that the people would become interested in the words of Jesus and the Divinely-inspired Twelve Apostles; and that they, who had taken to themselves the title of "Apostolic Bishop," would become mere ciphers. They knew, too, that the eighteen Ecumenical Councils held during those twelve hundred years had declared to be true Christian faith many things not taught in the Bible, and that they had omitted many things that are taught therein. They feared that the people, becoming Bible students, would know of these things, and thus would be upset the general belief based in the creeds – and not in the Bible.

We see, however, that their fears were almost groundless. The teachings of the creeds, impressed for twelve centuries, have so fastened themselves upon the minds of the people that they can read to the contrary in the Bible and never notice the discrepancy! However, a great Bible-study inclination came at that time to the British people. Several other translations were subsequently brought out, until finally the bishops considered it advisable to give the Bible to the people, impressing upon them the thought that the bishops had all along been upholding the Bible. Then, too, they warned the people against putting any construction upon the Bible that would make it different from the teaching of the so-called "Apostolic Bishops" in the creeds – threatening them with eternal torment.

Interest in the Bible continuing, King James thought to popularize himself by authorizing a committee to prepare the so-called King James Version. While it was in preparation, the

Roman Catholics, not to be outdone, produced a version entitled the Douay Bible – still in vogue. This also was given to the people, with the suggestion that it was in harmony with the creeds, and that any one interpreting it differently would be a heretic who could not be stopped even in Purgatory, but would pass straight on to eternal torture.

As it was, Tyndale and some of the others interested in the Bible suffered martyrdom, as enemies of the "Apostolic Bishops," and their creeds and institutions. The conflict proceeded, as already suggested, until 1799, when the Bible came into great prominence, nearly all of our great Bible Societies of today having been organized within fifteen years after that date. The foretold period of spiritual drought having been ended, a great spiritual shower came to the world. Nevertheless, as our next lesson will show, Ahab, and especially Jezebel, were unchanged. Elijah's life being again in danger, he fled to the wilderness.

PILGRIMS ALL, IN SOLEMN HASTE

"Silent, like men in solemn haste,
Girded wayfarers of the waste,
We pass out at the world's wide gate,
Turning our back on all its state;
We press along the narrow road
That leads to life, to bliss, to God.

"We cannot and we would not stay;
We dread the snares that throng the way;
We fling aside the weight and sin,
Resolved the victory to win;
We know the peril, but our eyes
Rest on the splendor of the prize.

"Tis but a little and we come
To our reward, our crown, our Home!
Another year, or more, or less,
And we have crossed the wilderness;
Finished the toil, the rest begun,
The battle fought, the triumph won!

"We grudge not, then, the toil, the way;
Its ending is the endless Day!
We shrink not from these tempests keen,
With little of the calm between;
We welcome each descending sun;
Ere morn our joy may be begun!"

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