

Ahab was one of the worst kings that Israel ever had. He was a very sinful man. And one of the worst things that he did according to the Bible was take for himself a wife from the Canaanites, a Canaanite princess by the name of Jezebel. And he served her gods and worshiped Baal and all of the other Canaanite gods. And so God needed to teach Ahab a lesson. He needed to show him beyond all doubt that he was, in fact, the Lord, the only God of heaven and earth. And to do so, he sent to him Elijah to perform a number of miracles, so that Ahab could see that he was in fact God.

And the first one of these miracles that Elijah did was to say that there would be a drought for many years. That for three whole years there wouldn't be any rain. This wasn't because Elijah was a meteorologist or because he was a very good guesser. This happened because he said so, because God worked it through him. And it happened just as he said. And during the time of that drought, Elijah continued to do miracles. Multiplying food for the widow of Zerah, so that she had food even when everybody else was starving during the famine. And he also raised that widow's son from death to show beyond all doubt that he was, in fact, the servant of the only living God.

But perhaps the most important of the miracles which Elijah did during that time happened at Mount Carmel. Because Ahab had called together all of the people and all of the prophets of Baal. And Elijah went to them and he said, "Let's have a contest, your god versus my god. We'll call on them, and whoever answers us with fire will show that they are in fact the Lord." And the prophets of Baal agree to this. They say, "Sure. Let's do it!" And so they offer their sacrifices, and they began to call all day long upon Baal. "Answer us, Baal! Give us a sign. Burn up this altar with fire." But nothing happened. The whole day they called, and there was no answer, because Baal, after all, is a false god. But Elijah, when it came for his turn at evening, offered up his sacrifice and covered the whole altar with water, all around it so it was completely drenched. And he called on the Lord once, and the Lord answered him with fire. A fire so great and a fire so strong that it not only burned the sacrifice, it burned up the stones and even the water which was around it. Because God only is the Lord. And so Elijah, to drive out the evil from the land, killed all the prophets of Baal. And God sent at that time a great rain, so great it was practically washing everything out, because God is the Lord, and he alone is God.

But there was one person in the land of Israel who wasn't very impressed by any of this, and that was Jezebel. In fact, she said to Elijah in our reading for today, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." "You killed my prophets, Elijah," Jezebel said, "and so I'm going to kill you." "And may the gods do something terrible to me," she said, "if I don't keep this promise by this time tomorrow." And Elijah was afraid of that. He was afraid of Jezebel, afraid of what she might do to him. And so he ran away, ran away to the south out of the land of Israel until he finally came to Horeb, which in the Bible is also called Sinai, the place where God first gave the Ten Commandments to his people all those years ago. And so fearful and afraid of Jezebel and what she might do, Elijah hid in a cave there, wondering what the future might hold.

But God came to him in that cave, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" In other words, God was saying, "Is it right for you to be here? Is it right for you to hide in this way? To be so fearful and afraid instead of being out where I commanded you to be?" Elijah

says to him, "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." In other words, he says, "I've done everything for you, God. I have listened to all of your words. I've done what you wanted me to do. I said what you wanted me to say. But for what? What did it get me in the end? Your people haven't been faithful to you. They're the ones who are trying to kill you. It seems like I'm the only one who is left." And even if Elijah doesn't want to admit it, he's still afraid, afraid of Jezebel and afraid of what might happen.

And so, God commands him and says to come out before him on the mountain. And when Elijah does so, God appears to him just like he did all those years ago to his people. The same mountain, the same place. And God speaks to him at that time. And God is indeed present here. Because just as in the book of Exodus, all of these great signs that show that God is here. The great wind which breaks the rock in pieces, the great earthquake which shakes the whole mountain, the great fire which is burning, all of these things show that the God of Israel is here. But just as in the book of Exodus too, there's no visible form. The only thing that Elijah can hear is a voice, the voice of God, showing that this is indeed the same Lord of heaven and earth. And God repeats his question to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And Elijah answers the same thing: "I am fearful and I'm afraid of what may happen."

And so God tells him at that time, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. Go home, Elijah. Go home and be where I want you to be." And here's the reasons why. And listen to what God says: "And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria." And what God is saying by that is that he's not just the God of Israel. He's not just the God of a couple of things and everything else just kind of happens. God is the Lord of all creation. All things fall under his control. He is the master of all of the ways of men. He is the master of the ways of history. There is no such thing as an accident when it comes to the things of God. So why are you afraid of Jezebel, Elijah? God is in control.

And he says to him: "And Jehu, the son of Nimshi, you shall anoint to be king over Israel." And Jehu was the one that God would raise up to destroy the house of Ahab. And that's exactly what he did. In the days of Ahab's son, Azariah, God raised up Jehu to destroy that whole house. And Jezebel herself was killed at that time. So by commanding Elijah to do this, God is saying that he's going to bring justice, that he's going to take care of this evil. That all of these things which Ahab is doing, all of these threats which Jezebel is saying, they'll come to nothing, because God is in control. So why are you afraid of Jezebel, Elijah? God rules over all things.

And he goes on to say: "And Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, you shall anoint to be prophet in your place." The ministry isn't coming to an end. God's Word will not come to an end, because God is the one who rules over all things. Justice will be done. And more than that, he says, "I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him." God's Church will go on, just as all of these other things will go on. So why then are you afraid of Jezebel, Elijah? God is in control.

And Elijah understands. And listening to the Lord, he goes home. And he anoints Elisha when he finds him, because he is no longer afraid of Jezebel. He knows that God is in control.

But Christians, how often do we act like Elijah? We know what God has said. We know what God has done. We know what he's capable of doing. But yet we are still afraid of Jezebel, afraid of what the world might do to us. Maybe we're fearful of politicians, thinking that they're going to destroy this country. They're going to ruin everything, and then what are we going to have? Perhaps we are fearful of opposition. I'm sure you've heard of the churches in Canada which have been burned. And we're probably wondering, "Is that going to happen here? Are we going to have to deal with those kinds of problems too? What kind of future is in store for us?" Perhaps we're fearful of organizations, anti-Christian organizations which seem to be gaining power with each passing day. And you can't say anything against them, because that would be politically incorrect. What are we going to do in this situation? What is the future of this country? Or maybe we're just fearful of the world. It's getting hard to be a Christian. What's going to happen to me? What's going to happen to my children? What's going to happen to my grandchildren in the days ahead? We become so fearful of Jezebel and the threats of this world that we forget everything that God has done.

But have you forgotten, Christians, what God has said to you? Have you forgotten the things that God has done? Jesus himself commanded the storms. The wind and the waves came to nothing, because the Lord spoke. Jesus himself walks on water, showing that he is the master of all things. Jesus himself rose from the grave on the third day, defeating death forever. He's not afraid of Jezebel. He's not afraid of this world. He is in control of all things. So we don't have to be afraid either and worry about what may happen. God will bring all evil to an end. God will give victory to his Church. Because Jesus has overcome the world, Christians. He will have the victory forever, so we don't have to be afraid.

So don't worry about Jezebel. Don't worry about the world. Jezebel will fall. She will be judged. And Christ will have the victory forever, because he is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And his kingdom will never come to an end. Don't be afraid, because Jesus wins in the end.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and give us peace in the midst of this world, so that we may rejoice knowing that your Son, Jesus Christ, has overcome the world, and that the victory belongs to him forever. In his name we pray. Amen.