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The Paradigm

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Jonathan Cahn

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And now the missing paradigm . . .

It has been there in one form or another from the beginning, from the time of Ahab. But it is time now that we open it.

Behind the rise and fall of the paradigm’s rulers lies another realm—the prophetic realm. Much of what takes place in the paradigm, from the throne to the battlefield, is the specific outworking of prophecy. And the key prophetic figure of the paradigm is one of the most famous of all prophetic figures—Elijah.

The second key prophetic figure is his apprentice, Elisha. We will count it as one ministry, one function, and one role as Elisha was carrying out the continuation of Elijah’s ministry. He would anoint those Elijah was called to anoint, be part of the fulfilling of Elijah’s prophecies, and even minister in Elijah’s anointing.

It was Elijah who was there from the beginning to challenge Ahab and Jezebel. It was Elijah who anointed Elisha, who would minister at the time of the paradigm’s resolution. It was Elijah who was first told to anoint
Ben-Hadad and Hazael, key players in the paradigm’s resolution. And it was Elijah’s prophecy that would be fulfilled in the judgment of Ahab, Joram, and Jezebel.

He would enter the biblical account in this way:

“And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, ’As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.’”

He comes on the stage as if out of nowhere. We know little about him, yet he seems from the start to be a major figure, an equal to the king. It is no accident that his first appearance in Scripture directly follows that of King Ahab. For Elijah would be God’s answer to the house of Ahab and its evils. It is as Ahab and Jezebel embark on their campaign of apostasy and their agenda to stamp out the ways of God that God raises up Elijah.

He would speak boldly to the throne. He would stand resolute against their evils. He would challenge their god Baal. He would close and open the heavens. He would confront the nation with its sin and call it to repentance. He would expose the sins of the royal house. His apprentice, Elisha, would prophesy to Joram, Hazael, and indirectly to Jehu. By this kings would rise and fall. It all began with Elijah. His impact on Israel, directly and indirectly, cannot be overstated. Virtually every facet of the paradigm bears some connection to this fiery prophet.

He was radical, dramatic, unafraid, bold, and powerful. And it was just such a figure that was required for the challenge of the times. He would stand as a counterforce to the nation’s apostasy. He would be hated by the priests of Baal and their followers and by Jezebel, who would threaten his life. Yet he would confront the king face-to-face. He would refuse to bend to the times or give any ground to the dictates of the apostasy. He would not be intimidated but would stand unyielding, uncompromised, and unashamed for the ways of God. And his life and ministry would be used to change the course of his nation’s history.

So who is Elijah?
civilization from its biblical foundations and its war against biblical morality and faith.

We have seen the same elements of this war in the apostasy of modern times. Western civilization is replaying the fall of ancient Israel. And it is this paradigm that forms the stage for the prophet Elijah. Elijah’s calling took place in the midst of a civilization once established for the purposes of God and once saturated with the knowledge of His ways. But it had fallen away. And now its fall was deepening and accelerating.

If Ahab, Jezebel, and Joram represent the darkness of the paradigm, then Elijah, along with Elisha, represents the light. Thus the paradigm of Elijah is the paradigm of the righteous and particularly of the righteous who live in the days of apostasy. And since the apostasy of Elijah’s day is the paradigm of the present apostasy, the paradigm of Elijah speaks especially to our day and is critical in revealing how God’s people are to stand, act, bear witness, overcome, and be a light to the days and world in which they live.

The witness of Elijah was unlike that of the righteous before him. In earlier ages, as in that of King David, the ways of God represented the ruling principle of the nation’s culture. Biblical faith was society’s reigning worldview, and biblical morality represented its prevailing code of ethics. There were always those who violated such codes, but the codes themselves remained in place. But in the days of Elijah all that was turned upside down. With the rise of Ahab and Jezebel the culture’s reigning worldview and principle was no longer biblical faith but paganism and pagan practices, its code of morality.

The days in which biblical faith constitutes the ruling principle of civilization are not the days of the prophet Elijah but the days of King David. But the days in which civilization is ruled by that which is anti-biblical are not the days of David but the days of Elijah. In the days of David biblical faith is a cultural phenomenon as it is largely joined to and one with the nation’s culture. It is established and part of the status quo. But in the days of Elijah biblical faith is not a cultural phenomenon. It becomes, instead, a counter-cultural phenomenon. It is disestablished. And it is not part of the status quo but is radical and revolutionary.

In the days of David the faith is royal. But in the days of Elijah the faith becomes prophetic. Or to put it another way, in the days when a civilization is characterized by the reign of Ahab, then the people of God must, in turn, be characterized by Elijah.
As the culture’s reigning principle changes from biblical to anti-biblical, the faith must change from a cultural phenomenon to a countercultural phenomenon, from that which is status quo to that which is radical and revolutionary. It ceases from being a ruling or royal phenomenon and becomes a prophetic phenomenon.

In past ages the Judeo-Christian faith in many ways constituted the reigning principle of Western civilization. This was the David stage. Church and state were in many ways joined. Christianity appeared as a cultural phenomenon and part of the status quo. But with the apostasy of Western civilization all that has been reversed. As in the paradigm biblical faith is no longer the culture’s reigning principle. Western civilization has moved to the Ahab stage. Thus God’s people must, in turn, move to the Elijah stage. The Judeo-Christian faith must change from functioning as a cultural phenomenon to a countercultural one. Its people must increasingly become a revolutionary people, a prophetic people.

“Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, ‘Is that you, O troubler of Israel?’”

Ahab called Elijah the “troubler of Israel.” Yet Elijah had simply remained faithful to the Lord’s ways. It was the nation that changed. And so for simply holding true to that which at one time the entire nation had held to, he was considered a radical. In the days when a nation becomes radically immoral, the moral will appear to be radical. So it was with Elijah. His refusal to go along with the apostasy made him a living witness, a reminder of what the nation had forsaken and that from which it had fallen. So he troubled it. A civilization that sees evil as good will now see good as evil. So those who in times past would have been looked upon as heroes and role models were now seen as enemies of the state. Thus the paradigm:

Those who refuse to go along with the culture’s apostasy, those who remain faithful to God’s ways, will now be labeled as radical, troublemakers, dangerous, even enemies of the state. Their very existence will bear witness of what the culture had once upheld but had now forsaken.
When a “Christian culture” apostatizes into a post-Christian or anti-Christian state, those who refuse to go along with the apostasy, those who remain Christian, who hold true to the Word and ways of God, become the Eliahs of the age. As it was with Elijah, their very existence will constitute a witness and reminder that will trouble the civilization in which they live concerning that from which it has fallen. As was Elijah, they will increasingly be labeled as radical and dangerous.

“And he answered, ‘I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals.’”

Ahab has led the nation in redefining what is good and evil. Now he seeks to redefine the righteous, namely Elijah. But Elijah refuses to be redefined. He sees the new morality, with its newly fabricated values and new dictates of political correctness, for what it is, a rebellion against the eternal laws of God. It is not Elijah but Ahab who is the troubles of the kingdom. And Elijah is not afraid to tell him so. For in the days of apostasy it is the lawless who judge and the criminals who reign.

A civilization in apostasy will attempt to redefine not only good and evil but the people of God themselves. Therefore the righteous must reject all redefinition. They must refuse to be redefined by the apostasy. They must hold unshakably to the eternal laws of God.

So in the modern apostasy of America and the West the culture will not only seek to redefine values and morality but also those who remain faithful to God. Therefore the righteous must do as did Elijah and reject all of the apostasy’s redefinitions. And they must themselves refuse to be redefined. They must hold unshakably to the eternal laws of God.

God always provided for Elijah. Even in days of famine his needs were attended to. Thus Elijah was never dependent on the culture that surrounded him. That was a crucial dynamic. Only by standing independent of the surrounding culture was he able to be a light into its darkness.
In the days of apostasy the people of God must become increasingly independent of the culture that surrounds them, especially separated from its corruptions. Only then will they be able to bring light into its darkness.

So in the midst of the apostasy those who hold true to God’s Word will have to increasingly wean themselves from any dependency on the surrounding culture, especially from its corruptions. But as with Elijah, this separation and independence is not to be sought for the purpose of withdrawal but rather for the impacting and engaging of the surrounding culture for God. Only those who are not of the darkness can become a light to the darkness.

In order to become independent of the corruption of his times, Elijah had to become all the more dependent on God. He was thus a man of deep prayer and communion with God.

The ability of God’s people to become independent from the corruption and defilement of the surrounding culture will be proportionate to their increasing dependence on God.

In order to be unplugged from the darkness, one must become all the more plugged in to the light. So in the days of apostasy it is all the more critical for believers to become all the more plugged in to God through prayer and communion in His presence. The more dependent they are on Him, the more independent they will become of the surrounding culture. Their power and effectiveness will depend on it.

Elijah was a man uncompromised, undivided, single-minded, and focused. Others had compromised with the evil of their day and had disqualified themselves from being used of God. But Elijah went in the opposite direction. The more evil the culture became, the more strongly he stood. And it was this radical and uncompromised stand that allowed him to change the course of his nation.
In the days of increasing apostasy those who compromise with evil will fall. But the one who will most commit to living undivided, uncompromised, and wholeheartedly for God will also be the one most powerfully used by God for His purposes.

In the days when immorality becomes a culture’s ruling principle, the temptation for God’s people will be to soften their stands, to bend under the pressure, and to compromise with the dark. But those who do so will disqualify themselves from being used of God as they were meant to be used. The righteous must instead commit to living as did Elijah and to resist all temptation to compromise and all pressure to soften their stand. Rather, they must move in the opposite direction. When the dark grows increasingly darker, it is then that the lights must grow increasingly bright. When evil goes from bad to worse, the righteous must go from good to great. In a Christian civilization the candles shine in the light of the sun. But in a post-Christian civilization they shine in the darkness of the night. They become lights of contradiction. But it is the contrary light that changes the history of lives and nations. It is the radical light, the light of the candle in the night, that lights up the world.

Elijah was a man of faith and confidence, of boldness and courage against all odds, of a stubborn hope that would not yield in spite of all that was arrayed against it. Despite his circumstances and despite those who sat on his nation’s throne, he knew who was King above all kings and which side it was that would prevail in the end.

In days when darkness rules, the righteous must see beyond the dark and hold by faith to a stubborn unyielding hope, seeing above all powers to the reign of the true King and to the assurance of the victory that waits at the end. They must be bold, courageous, and fully confident of the good.

In the days of the paradigm Elijah stood in the minority. Those who pursued evil or who simply accepted it and went along with it were the majority. The fight must have often looked hopeless. Yet Elijah stood and acted as if he was on the winning side—and he was.

So in the days of mass apostasy it will often look as if God’s people are on the losing side. But they must be all the more stubborn in faith, all the
more bold in truth, and all the more confident of victory. They must resist
the temptation to be silent. They must be as Elijah and fight their good fight
and take up their stand as if they are on the winning side—as, in fact, they
are.

“The Elijah said to all the people, ‘Come near to me.’ So all the people
came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was
broken down.”

In the days of Ahab, Elijah summoned the nation to Mount Carmel in
an attempt to break the curse that rested on the land. For the curse to be
broken, the people had to choose which God they would serve, the Lord or
Baal. But before that choice could be made, the altar of the Lord that had
been broken down had to be repaired.

In the apostasy the Lord’s altar is broken. For there
to be restoration and revival, there must be a return
to that altar. And that altar must be repaired.

What is an altar? It is that upon which a sacrifice is killed. The faith
on which America and Western civilization was founded doesn’t have an
altar—or does it? At the spiritual foundation of American and Western civ-
ilization lies an altar—the cross. What is the cross? It is that upon which the
sacrifice was killed. The cross is an altar—the altar of the Lord.

According to the paradigm, in the days of apostasy the altar of the Lord
is neglected and broken down. So in the present apostasy the cross, the
altar of Western civilization, has likewise become neglected and broken
down. For a civilization given to idolatry and materialism will ultimately
devalue the altar of the cross. A culture obsessed with self-gratification and
self-worship will reject that which epitomizes self-sacrifice. Thus it will dis-
parage and break down the Lord’s altar. The pursuit of prosperity, success,
and self-realization has caused the cross to be neglected and broken down
as well in many of the houses that bear His name.

Revival could not come in the ancient case apart from a return to the
Lord’s altar. Neither can revival come in the present case without the same.
It can only come in a return to the foundation, to the cross, to Jesus. And it
must be the Eliahs of this age who first return to that altar, who build it up,
and who, as did Elijah, call back to that altar the civilization in which they
live. Only then can there be true revival.
“And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’”

Elijah called the nation to make a decision once and for all. Without that decision there could be no restoration.

For there to be revival and restoration, there must be repentance. And for there to be repentance, there must be decision.

On April 29, 2015, I stood in the US Capitol Building and spoke to a gathering of leaders and members of Congress. When I sought the Lord as to what message I should give, I was led to Elijah’s moment on Mount Carmel. I gave this word:

“We have come to a most critical moment. As Elijah stood on top of Mount Carmel and cried out to Israel in its hour of decision, in between two altars and two gods, his voice now cries out to America and says to us, ‘Choose you this day whom you will serve.’ Seventy years ago, the chaplain of the United States Senate cried out in the same voice and said to this nation, ‘If the Lord be God, then follow Him! But if Baal, then follow him . . . and go to hell.’

“Tonight, America stands at the crossroads. And as Elijah came to the summit of Mount Carmel to make a declaration, we have come this night to Capitol Hill to declare that our God is not Baal . . . We have come to this hill to declare that there is only one God . . . the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . . the God of Israel and of all nations . . . He alone is the Rock upon which this nation has come into existence . . . We will not bow down to Baal.”

I was led to speak of America standing at the crossroads in between God and Baal. What was in the paradigm had not yet come to me. Two weeks before I gave that word, Hillary Clinton had declared her candidacy for the presidency. Less than a week before I spoke, she issued her proclamation that deep-seated religious beliefs would have to be changed. The day before I spoke, the Supreme Court heard the case that would decide the future of marriage in America. Two months after I spoke, Donald Trump declared his candidacy for the presidency. And two months after that the ancient sanctuaries of the god against whom I specifically spoke, the temples of Baal, would come crashing down.
America is still at this writing standing at the crossroads in between God and Baal. And only through repentance can there be revival. And only through decision can there be repentance.

We stand in the most critical of times, the days of Elijah. We must pray for our civilization’s Mount Carmel moment and call for the decision that must be made. But we ourselves must likewise have our own Mount Carmel moment. We must each bring to an end any lingering indecision or wavering that still remains. We must each choose whom we will serve. For the one who serves the Lord completely, wholeheartedly, and with no reservations will be the one whom God will anoint, as He anointed Elijah, for the purpose of great and mighty things, even for the changing of the history of nations.

We have uncovered the template of Elijah. It is time now that we become part of it. It is time we become the Elijah of the paradigm.

Or, in other words, if these are the days of Elijah—it is time that we become the Elijahs of the day.

As for the one who reads these words and ponders the question as to how one can be safe in the approach of judgment or how one can be saved in the approach of eternity—the answer is found in the same place—in the altar of the Lord, in the cross. Outside of that altar there is no safety or hope. Inside of it there is no fear or judgment.

It is written, “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”6 That name, which we know as Jesus, in its original form is Yeshua. Yeshua means God is salvation. That is the crux of the matter—not religion or culture—but the love of God—that God Himself would place Himself in our place and take upon Himself our judgment and overcome death, that we could be saved. It remains, from ancient times to now, the greatest manifestation of love we could possibly fathom. There is no greater love and in the end no other hope.

It is the love of God, the mercy of God, and the forgiveness of all sins. And it is only in that love and mercy that we find new life and new birth. And it is only in that new birth that one can be saved—as it is written, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, one must be born again. It is eternal life; it is the peace and joy of heaven now and forever.

It is given freely and without condition to all who will receive it. It is received by faith. It can begin wherever one is with a simple prayer of one’s heart to receive the love and mercy of His sacrifice and the power of His resurrection. It begins by receiving His presence into one’s heart and
life—then following in His footsteps every day and every moment as His disciple.

As Elijah’s call to the people required a decision, so does salvation. To not decide is to decide against it. To delay or postpone making that decision is to not decide. So it is written, “Choose you this day.” For it is “this day” that is the only day it can be chosen. Today is the only day in which salvation can take place…and the only moment is now.

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