

THE LIFE & TIMES OF ELIJAH (Part 1)

“Shining Bright in a Dark World” (1 Kings 16:29-17:1)

INTRO: Begin a series on the life, times, and ministry of the OT prophet Elijah. He was one of the most influential and powerful servants of God. G. Getz . . . Elijah was the greatest of all non-writing prophets. Only Jesus, David, Moses, Joseph, and Abraham have longer biblical narratives. He stands out as a bright and shining light in a very dark world. He appears on the pages of the NT more than any other prophet (28 times). Only prophets Isaiah (400), Moses (80), and David are quoted more than Elijah (29 times).

I. THE PERIOD OF ELIJAH (1 Kings 12-16)

Some context on Elijah’s times: times are alike and issues much the same. Very dark days! Isaiah 5 describes . . .

- A. DIVIDED KINGDOM (MAP) - With Solomon’s death 931 BC the nation’s glory began to fade (1 Ki. 12-14). The SK (JUDAH) of two tribes was taken into Babylonian captivity in 586 BC. The NK (Israel) had ten tribes and was taken into captivity by Assyrians in 722 BC.
- B. DECLINING ISRAEL (NK), lasted some 200 years. ALL 20 kings of Israel beginning with Jeroboam (1 Ki. 13:33-34; 14:20) were wicked and led Israel into deeper spiritual decline and darkness (1 Ki. 15:25-16:28). These kings led the nation into over 200 years of murder, deception, and religious perversion.
- C. DEGENERATE AHAB (1 Ki. 16:29-34) - Ahab was the worst of all (vv.30,33). In direct violation to God’s command, he married Jezebel, the daughter (1 Kings 21:25) of an idolatrous Phoenician King (Exo. 34:12-17). She introduced open idolatry (v.32). Baal & Asherah controlled rain & fertility and were appeased by immorality & violence. Almost the entire nation became compromising idolaters.
- D. DEFINITE COMPARISON to the times of today and those of Elijah. Our nation on the skids...spiritual compromise, political corruption, confusion, etc.

II. THE PERSON OF ELIJAH - Elijah suddenly appears (17:1). What do we know about this person?

- A. His NAME means “Jehovah is my God and my strength”. Jehovah is the *only* God. Jehovah was his life. In a day marked by compromise & tolerance, he loved his God more than anything. His name was a virtual bumper sticker to Queen Jezebel! It was a pluralistic society that had many ways to God. Exclusivism is not popular, esp. religious. If have name of “Christian”, we believe in exclusivism. Normally, people don’t care what religion you follow, just as long as you don’t say it’s the only way. Elijah’s very name said that his God was the only God.

- B. He was JUST A MAN - James says, “A man just like us” (5:17). Like all of us with passion, feelings, problems, failures, weaknesses. God uses ordinary people & Elijah was an ordinary man (1 Cor. 1:26-29).
- C. His HOME LAND (“the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead”)—MAP. . . *Tishbe* means “traveler” (converter) and *Gilead* means “rough and rugged”. He came from a rural, mountainous, & middle-of-nowhere area east of the river Jordan. It was a lonely and hard place, much reflected in Elijah. Now to Samaria (17:1) - MAP

III. THE POWER OF ELIJAH (17:1-2) - What was the source of his strength and the secret of his power? Why was he able to shine bright in a dark world? What do we need to know and believe?

- A. *His God was Real and Alive* (“as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives”) - Jehovah was real and alive in Elijah’s life. He was overwhelmed by God’s aliveness in his life. The world is screaming for reality that God is alive. Most evident in human experience, where God is at work in changing lives. People are not impressed by our buildings, by our arguments, by our knowledge, but by the reality of Jesus Christ in our life. How do you convince a dark world that God is alive & real? By His aliveness in our own lives. Elijah lived in the conscious presence of God. God was more real to him than any Ahab or Jezebel. It is the practice of the presence of God that enables a child of God to shine bright in a dark world.
- B. *His God Ruled* (“whom I serve”) - Elijah knew he was a servant of the living God. He was God’s representative to his time. I am staggered by the fact that I am a personal representative of the living God to my society - at work, in classroom, neighborhood, etc. He was submitted & obedient to God’s rule in his life.
- C. *His God provided* the Resources he needed (vv.1b-2).
 - 1. *The Word of God* - Elijah had the knowledge of God’s Word and a belief that God could be counted on to keep His Word. He believed God’s Word was true and could be trusted. Drought was prophesied (Deut. 11:16-17). Elijah was willing to stick his neck out for God.
 - 2. *The Power of Prayer* (Jam. 5:17) - He knew he couldn’t be anything and do anything alone. He needed resources beyond himself. Remember Eph. 6:17-18? Word of God and Power of prayer!

CONC: It was not convenient or comfortable to stand for God in that generation. Yet, a man just like each of us. God used him. Why? Because He knew the reality of God in his life and times, the rulership of God, and he availed himself of the resources of God. He was sold out to God (2 Chron. 16:9). Elijah did not have one thing that is not also available to us.