

## Elijah – Prophet of Confrontation #1

# Elijah and the World

1Ki 17:1

### Introduction:

1. Elijah is one of the heroes of the Bible who, once you meet him and get to know him, you'll never forget him.
  - a. His prayers of faith are unparalleled
  - b. His boldness in proclaiming God's message reminds us of Paul
  - c. His determination to serve God and do His will makes Roman 12:1-2 come alive with meaning.
1. Elijah comes out of nowhere to appear on the Biblical record
  - a. Like a thunderbolt, he appears and tells King Ahab that a severe drought is coming to the land
  - b. There will be no rain, dew, moisture, just the burning, searing, wilting sun day after day.
2. Such a stunning announcement demands an explanation
  - a. Why is God's judgment coming on Israel?
  - b. Who is Elijah? Who is King Ahab?
  - c. Why does Elijah appear now?
3. This lesson will be introductory - trying to answer these questions

## **I. The Politics of the Rulers – 1 Ki 17:1**

### **A. Beginnings of the Northern Kingdom**

1. Under Saul, David and Solomon, Israel was a unified group of 12 tribes. This is the golden age of Israel
2. After the death of Solomon the nation divided
  - a) *Solomon did not stay close to the Lord in his later years*
  - b) *He married many strange, foreign wives and brought them and their gods to Israel*
  - c) *These wives eventually turned his heart away from the Lord to the false gods – 1 Ki 11:5, 7*
3. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, became ruler in Solomon's place
  - a) *Rehoboam's advisors plead for a more compassionate govt*
  - b) *They ask that the heavy yoke be removed from the people*
  - c) *Rehoboam did not listen to the advisors and was even harder on the people that his father was*
4. The people revolted and 10 of the 12 tribes separated themselves
  - a) *Only the tribes of Benjamin and Judah stayed with Rehoboam*
  - b) *There was no real benefit since the people did not correct the cause of the problem, the moral and spiritual decline*

## **B. Rulers of the Northern Kingdom**

1. The Northern Kingdom never had a godly king
  - a) *All 19 kings were evil*
  - b) *Elijah showed up during the reign of the 7<sup>th</sup> king*
2. A look at these 7 kings will show the reason for the sin-denouncing ministry of Elijah
  - a) *Jereboam*
    - (1) Started the new nation down a sinful path- 1Ki 14:9
    - (2) 25x the Bible says that he “made Israel sin”
    - (3) He made 2 calves of gold and corrupted the religion of Israel – 1 Ki 13:33
    - (4) His evil reign lasted 22 wicked yrs and he was succeeded by his son Nadab
  - b) *Nadab*
    - (1) He reigned only 2 yrs, but they were wicked
    - (2) He walked the way of his father – 1 Ki 15:26
    - (3) He was assassinated by Baasha who replaced him
  - c) *Baasha*
    - (1) Reigned for 24 bloody years
    - (2) He killed everyone in the house of Jereboam – 1 Ki 15:34
  - d) *Elah*
    - (1) After the death of Baasha, his son, Elah reigned
    - (2) His reign was only 2 yrs and he was a drunk
    - (3) He was assassinated by Zimri
  - e) *Zimri*
    - (1) He killed all the members of the house of Elah
    - (2) His reign lasted only 7 days and he was killed by Omri a high-ranking military official
  - f) *Omri*
    - (1) Reigned over the northern kingdom awhile then over the entire kingdom
    - (2) He was wicked and out-sinned his predecessors – 1 Ki 16:25
  - g) *Ahab – 1Ki 16:31*
    - (1) Took over when Omri, his father, died
    - (2) He reigned 20 yrs and was king during most of the life of Elijah
    - (3) He married the wicked Jezebel who was given over to Baal worship and worship of Ashtoreth
    - (4) The wives of the other kings were not mentioned
    - (5) She spearheaded the attempt to kill all the prophets of God as Baal worship swept the land
    - (6) She had a major temple built to Baal in Samaria the capital city of the Northern kingdom

## **II. The Piety of the People**

### **A. The Worship of Baal**

1. Baal was the god of rain and fertility
2. He was the supreme male god / Ashtoreth the supreme female god
3. Vile, sensual, morally rotten things were done in their religion
4. Morals and character in general deteriorated across the land
5. Jezebel did all she could to wipe out worship of God
6. Elijah thought he was the only one left

## **B. The Worship of Jehovah**

1. The worship of Baal was dominating and the worship of Jehovah was declining to the point of extinction
2. The chasm between God and his people reached its widest point
3. Persecutions eliminated many adherents and those who remained were intimidated
4. When true religion is unpopular, church, home and govt are in danger
5. We should tremble when we compare Israel in Elijah's day to America today

## **III. The Prophet of the Lord**

(*a*) And Elijah the Tishbite, [who was] of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, [*As*] the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

- Like a meteor that flashes across the inky blackness of Israel's spiritual night Elijah showed up on scene
- No one else could have handled a couple like Ahab / Jezebel
- The rugged prophet from Gilead became God's prophet of confrontation

### **A. His Name**

1. His name was significant for his ministry and time
2. His name means "My God is Jehovah"
3. The main issue in Elijah's day was whether Jehovah or Baal was God
4. It was clear whose side Elijah was on – there was no doubt
  - a) *When most were saying "Baal is my god"*
  - b) *Elijah said, "My God is Jehovah"*
5. The distance between God and His people was great, but Elijah would stand in the gap

### **B. His Parents**

1. Nothing is said in scripture about Elijah's parents
2. The name they gave Elijah says something about them
3. They were Courageous
  - a) *Worship of Baal was quite popular in Elijah's day*
  - b) *Jehovah worshippers were being imprisoned and slain*
  - c) *To name one's child, Elijah was a very courageous thing to do*
  - d) *If you are going to have a good testimony for Jesus Christ, you will have to demonstrate a great deal of courage at times*
4. They were Correct
  - a) *Elijah's parents had their theology correct*
  - b) *Jehovah, not Baal, was God*
  - c) *You cannot have a good testimony if your doctrine is not correct*
  - d) *Many today play down the importance of doctrine*

5. They were Conspicuous
  - a) *Their testimony was conspicuous because of the presence of Elijah*
  - b) *Where ever Elijah went, people would be reminded by his name that "Jehovah is God"*
  - c) *Our testimony today needs to be conspicuous*
  - d) *Do not hide it under a bushel - [Matt 5:15](#) but put it where it can be seen and heard*

### **C. His Home**

1. He is called Elijah the Tishbite – from Tishbe
2. We do not know much about the Tishbites, but they were from the area of Gilead
3. This was a rugged, mountainous area east of the Jordan River
4. The people from this territory were rugged, tanned, muscular from hard work outdoors
5. Elijah was like the territory from which he came, rugged

### **D. His Manner**

1. Folks from Gilead were not known for their polish, sophistication or diplomacy
2. Elijah was probably coarse and crude, rough and rugged
3. He wouldn't win many friends, but he was not easily forgotten
4. He was a blunt, "in your face" kind of man

### **E. His Office**

1. Elijah was a prophet
2. The fact that God sent a prophet showed the marked decline in the worship of the land
3. Though greatly needed, the ministry of Elijah was not popular
4. The office that Elijah held was perilous - he filled it with excellence
5. No matter how bad the evil, God can raise people up to overcome it, for ever Ahab there is an Elijah
6. The more we look at Elijah the more we realize what God can do with a believer who is dedicated to Him.

### **F. His Honors**

1. Scripture honors Elijah
2. More is written of him in the NT than any other prophet other than Moses
3. God honored Elijah
  - a) *He was one of two who did not die*
  - b) *He later appeared on the Mt of Transfiguration with Jesus*

Conclusion:

1. God looks for special people for difficult times
  - a. God needed a special man to shine the light in those dark days
  - b. God didn't find his man in the palace or in the schools of Samaria he found him in Tishbe
  - c. The man who would stand in the gap must be tough - not suave /slick
  - d. It takes backbone to stand alone and uncommon courage would be needed to stand before King Ahab
  - e. It takes courage to stand up and say, "That's wrong!"
  - f. In our schools, our offices and factories, our lunchrooms and boardrooms, our halls of ivy and our halls of justice we need men and women and young people of God
  - g. We need respected professionals, athletes, homemakers, teachers, politicians and private citizens who will stand for the things of God even if they have to stand alone - stand tall, stand firm - stand strong
2. God's methods are often surprising
  - a. God did not raise up an army to come in and destroy Ahab and Jezebel
  - b. He did not send some scintillating prince to argue His case or try to impress Ahab and Jezebel
  - c. God did the surprising, the unimaginable - He sent Elijah
3. We stand before God
  - a. When we stand alone in the gap, we are standing before God
    1. Elijah's strength and power came from prayer
      - a) Prayer in private was the source of his power in public
      - b) He could stand boldly before the king because he had knelt humbly before God
    2. Elijah's strength and power came from knowledge of God
    3. Elijah's strength and courage came from his consciousness of the divine presence - "Before whom I stand"