

Elijah: Prophet of Power
1 Kings 19:1–18

April 17, 2005

SERMON NOTES

A. Outline of life of Elijah

1. 1 Kings 17:1 — his first action is to announce ...
2. James 5:17 — this happened in response to ...
3. 1 Kings 16:30–31, 1 Kings 21:25 — the reason was on account of the S_____ of King A_____ and Queen J_____
4. 1 Kings 17
 - a. at first Elijah, by the brook Cherith, was ...
 - b. then he went to Zeraphath, where ...
5. 1 Kings 18
 - a. at the end of ____ years Elijah has a contest with ...
 - b. the contest is whose god will ...
 - c. before Elijah prayed, he had them ...
 - d. James 5:18, after God won the contest, Elijah prayed again on the top of Mount Carmel and ...
6. 1 Kings 19; after re-commissioning, Elijah anointed Elisha to be ...
7. 1 Kings 21
 - a. the king wanted the V_____ belonging to Naboth
 - b. When he couldn't get his way, he sulked and the queen...
8. 2 Kings 1; when the next king, Ahaziah, sent troops to take Elijah, he ...

9. 2 Kings 2
 - a. Elijah's ministry ended by ...
 - b. Elisha saw this and received ...

B. Desert Life

1. Psalm 23 is when we ...
2. Psalm 77:7–9 is when we ...
3. Elijah's symptoms of desert life
 - a. 1 Kings 19:3, 4, 10, 14 — he was not ...
 - b. 1 Kings 19:10, 14 — he felt ...
 - c. 1 Kings 19:10, 14 — he felt ...

C. God's dealing with Elijah

1. Elijah was at Horeb (Moses met God in the mountain there, Exodus 33:22, and had God's glory pass by him); God's question to Elijah should have reminded Elijah that in the darkness (1 Kings 8:12), even in the darkest times ...
2. God shows Elijah 3 impressive events: W_____, E_____, and F_____; but God ...
3. instead, God was ...
4. and He encourages Elijah in 3 ways
 - a. 1.
 - b. 2.
 - c. 3.

D. Hebrews 1:1-2, John 1:12–14, 18: greater than even the greatest of the prophets God has now spoken through ...

—{1}. **1 Kings 19:1-18** **Elijah: Prophet of Power**

A. Introduction

1. You may know of Philip Keller has written a number of books
 - a. A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23,
 - b. A Layman Looks at the Lord's Prayer, and,
 - c. Elijah: Prophet of Power; from which we get our sermon title this morning; a book of 160 pages, examining the life of Elijah to develop applications in Christian living

2. Now Elijah sweeps onto the stage of history like a summer prairie storm in 1 Kings 17 & leaves like a rocket in 2 Kings 2
 - a. to read aloud the chapters from Kings which relate Elijah's words and deeds would take about 25–30 minutes
 - b. there are also a number of places in the Bible which tell us a bit more about Elijah: in Chronicles, in Malachi, in the Gospels, and the epistles to the Romans and of James.
 - c. but we can highlight the ministry of this great prophet, this man of God in but a few moments

B. Elijah enters Israel's history suddenly as we have mentioned

1. without introduction, without explanation, but simply with the words (1 Kings 17:1; NAS): **Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."**
 - a. James 5:17a (NAS) tells us a little more about this: **Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain ...**
 - b. and it didn't: not a shower, not a sprinkle, not a drop
 - c. **... and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months."** (James 5:17b NAS)

2. what was the reason for God's drastic action? Some verses:
 - a. 1 Kings 16:30–31 (NAS): **And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. And it came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and**

went to serve Baal and worshipped him.

- b. 1 Kings 21:25 (NAS): "Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him."
3. after telling Ahab of God's immediate punishment
 - a. Elijah went and dwelt by the brook Cherith where he was fed by raven who brought him food and meat each day
 - b. when the brook Cherith dried up, then Elijah went north to Zeraphath – that's near Sidon, Jezebel's home country – and through the miracle of the flour and oil that did not become exhausted, he is sustained by a widow woman for the remainder of the years of drought — this is the same widow woman whose young son Elijah raises from the dead
 - c. So Ahab and his godly servant Obadiah go out searching the land for water to preserve a few of their herds — and Elijah meets Obadiah and tells him to fetch Ahab
 - d. You probably all know the next part of the story, for when they meet Elijah proposes a contest to show who is God: the 450 prophets of Ba'al versus Elijah;
 - (A) who will answer by fire: Ba'al or the Lord God?
 - (B) the prophets of Ba'al take all day, praying & dancing before Ba'al so he would light a fire under the sacrifice
 - (C) 1 Kings 18:27 (NAS): *And it came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened."*
 - (D) the prophets of Ba'al became more and more frantic, cutting themselves and raving; but not even a spark
 - (E) as evening came on, it was Elijah's turn
 - (F) just to make it fair, he put a trench around his altar and had them pour water over the sacrifice until it was soaked and the trench full of water
 - (G) then Elijah's simple prayer, 1 Kings 18:36-38a (NAS): *Then it came about at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that*

this people may know that Thou, O LORD, art God, and *that* Thou hast turned their heart back again." Then the fire of the LORD fell, ...

(H) so the 450 prophets of Ba'al were slain

(I) then Elijah went to the top of mount Carmel, and (James 5:18; NAS): And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

4. which brings us to our Scripture reading, 1 Kings 19:1–18 (NAS):

¹ Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." ³ And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers." ⁵ And he lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, "Arise, eat." ⁶ Then he looked and behold, there was at his head a bread cake *baked on* hot stones, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you." ⁸ So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.

⁹ Then he came there to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." ¹¹ So He said, "Go forth, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD; *but* the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, *but* the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² And after the earthquake a fire, *but* the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing. ¹³ And it came about when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice *came* to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁴ Then

he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." ¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram; ¹⁶ and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. ¹⁷ And it shall come about, the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall put to death. ¹⁸ Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."

5. now just to outline the rest of Elijah's history following what we have just read ...
 - a. right away he anoints Elisha to be his successor (I hope that you don't have the same problem that I have keeping these two great prophets straight ... I can keep at least one thing clear: Elijah comes first; they appear in alphabetical order)
 - b. it is left to Elisha to carry out the actual anointing of Jehu and Hazael to being king of their countries
6. in 1 Kings 21 we read that Ahab coveted a vineyard belonging to Naboth and when he couldn't have it, he pouted and sulked like a little boy ... then Jezebel took a hand, had Naboth killed and told Ahab just to take the vineyard
 - a. Elijah came to Ahab and pronounced sentence on both him and his wife Jezebel, for their murder of Naboth
 - b. Jezebel was to have a horrible fate, that is sufficient to say
 - c. Ahab's entire family was to be slain; no descendants left
7. in 2 Kings 1, after Ahab's death, his son Ahaziah rules for a while and then falls sick and enquires of Ba'al-zebub — the lord of the flies is one translation — and Elijah sends a message to him: 2 Kings 1: 6b (NAS):
..."Thus says the LORD, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel *that* you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die."
 - a. so Ahaziah sent 3 troops, one after another, to get Elijah
 - b. on the first two, Elijah called down fire to destroy them from heaven, but he went with the third troop

in peace and repeated the message to Ahaziah in person; Ahaziah died

8. finally, in 2 Kings 2, Elisha his successor follows Elijah to the end and asks for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, which is granted when he sees Elijah, separated from himself by a chariot of fire and taken up into heaven in a whirlwind
9. that is a brief summary of the life and deeds of Elijah: Prophet of power; "but what," you may say, "has that to do with me? I don't have occasion to call for a drought on the land. I don't think I will be resurrecting a dead child. God doesn't seem to be calling me to be fed by ravens or a widow by a miracle of an unending supply of flour and oil. There isn't much opportunity to challenge 450 false prophets to a trial by fire. Going up into heaven in a whirlwind? ... not very likely for me!"
10. well in this 19th chapter of 1 Kings which we read, there we find an Elijah with whom we can identify; Elijah at his weakest; Elijah in fear; Elijah complaining; Elijah feeling sorry for Elijah — Elijah: Prophet of Power? ... it doesn't seem so
 - a. yet it is the example of saints when they are their weakest that can be most instructive to us
 - b. here are some thoughts from a devotional I discovered: ^{-{2}}.
 - (A) Webster's Dictionary defines "desert" in the following ways:
 - (1) an arid, barren land,
 - (2) a wild uninhabited and uncultivated tract, or
 - (3) a desolate or forbidding area.
 - (B) to which the author adds a fourth: A period of time in an individual's life when God seems distant, yet faith is forged.
 - (C) Every Christian goes through the desert. We don't want to, but we need to. For it is in the desert that real faith is formed. ... it is in the desert that we are stripped of the things that keep us from achieving our highest ... Desert time is necessary – for it is in the desert that we really learn how to trust God.
 - (D) Now, the good news in all this is that God rarely starts any of us out in the desert. ... Our sins have been removed, our burden has been eased ... For the first time we're experiencing true freedom and peace and joy and forgiveness

(E) But sooner or later things start turning south on us. Our prayers don't get answered as quickly. Our burdens seem heavier. And God seems incredibly distant to us. We've been in the "green pastures" of Psalm 23 for awhile but now we're in "the valley of the shadow of death". We were on the mountain top. Now we're in the desert (and most of us don't like it). Listen to the Psalmist in the desert:

(F) "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favour again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?" (Psalm 77:7-9)

c. in 1 Kings 19, we encounter Elijah in the desert, both literally and figuratively and there are some powerful lessons here for us; we'll touch on some of them today

C. Elijah's Symptoms of Desert Life

1. He was not rational

a. when you read this through it is almost humorous

b. in 19:3, after Jezebel sent a threatening letter, he up and runs for his life; this is funny in itself you he had no fear that God could not deal with the 450 prophets of Ba'al, but this one wicked woman is a different matter

c. but wait; so he is afraid for his life ... what does he pray for in verse 4? "O LORD, take my life" ... now that really makes sense doesn't it! ... is that rational? ... not!

d. and his complaint to God in verses 10 and 14 is? ... "they seek my life, to take it away"

e. well, Elijah, make up your mind! ... be rational!

f. and that is one of the problems when we are in a period of desert life; we don't think clearly; we just don't consider who God is and how great He is and how loving and kind

2. He felt unappreciated

a. "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts"

b. well, look what I have done for you, LORD, and look at what the rest of the people in the land are doing

c. "the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword"

d. and, LORD, look at them! ... compare me to them, Lord; why am I being persecuted? ... and they prosper

e. Don't you appreciate me, LORD? How easy it is when we are in the desert life to frame those words, if not in our mouths, at least in our thoughts and attitudes

3. He felt alone

a. the prophets of God they have killed

b. twice he says, "and I alone am left"

c. well, there he was alone before the 450 prophets of Ba'al (as well as the 400 prophets of Astoreth) and God was able to deal with that; but his cry is "and I alone am left"

d. when we are in the desert life, it is so very easy to feel that we are alone; that there is no one to comfort, to cheer, to help, and to appreciate us

4. Well, how does God deal with Elijah in his time in the desert? How does he bring His servant, His powerful, zealous servant, to a renewed trust and confidence, out of the desert place

D. God's dealing with Elijah

1. First, there is the nuance of God's question which Elijah seems to have missed: "What are you doing HERE, Elijah"

2. now where was Elijah at this time? ... in a cave; in a cave in the mountain of God; in Horeb

a. the Bible speaks of Horeb and Sinai as essentially the same

b. it was here that the law was given to Moses on the tablets

c. and it was here in Exodus 33:22 that Moses stood in the cleft of a rock, while the glory of God passed by him

d. and that brings us very close to the question's implication

3. for God doesn't ask Elijah "What are you doing THERE in that cave, Elijah" but, in effect, "What are you doing HERE in this cave, Elijah" — the question says to Elijah, "I AM with you"

a. in the darkness, God is there: Solomon spoke these words, "The LORD said that He would dwell in the thick darkness" (1 Kings 8:12)

b. and Elijah, in his spate of self-pity answers not the question but lists all his frustrations

- c. how important it is when we are in the desert life to listen to what God is saying to us, trying to get across to us
4. Well, God doesn't stop sending His message to His messenger but next He gives to Elijah a lesson about Himself
 - a. Elijah is told to go forth and watch, but almost before he moves, we read that the LORD Himself passes by
 - b. and Elijah witnesses three impressive events
 - (A) a mighty tempest, a wind, a hurricane; breaking even the rocks ... surely this is God in all His power! ... no; "but the LORD was not in the wind"
 - (B) then an earthquake ... surely this is God in all His power?... no; "but the LORD was not in the earthquake"
 - (C) then a fire ... surely this is God in all His power?... no; "but the LORD was not in the fire"
 - c. then came something else: "a sound of gentle blowing" (NAS), "a sound of sheer silence" (NRSV), "a still, small voice" (many), "a gentle whisper" (NIV, NLT) — and this moved Elijah to action, for here was God ... he covers his face and steps to the entrance of the cave in obedience
 - d. the lesson: God doesn't always do the spectacular, not even with one of His greatest prophets, Elijah: prophet of power; but rather, often with the still, small voice; the urging of the Holy Spirit of God working in your heart
5. Elijah hears the question once again and repeats his complaints to God; God is infinitely patient and hears our complaints, thankfully, and now he provides some concrete answers
 - a. first, He sends Elijah out with a new commission: you are to look after anointing a prophet and two kings
 - b. second, by anointing a prophet, Elijah is no longer alone; he has a companion — a man of like zeal to his own
 - c. third, he reveals that there are 7,000 more who have been faithful to the LORD: you are definitely not alone!
6. I don't know if this cave on Horeb was the same cleft in the rock in which God put Moses to protect him

when He passed by Moses and revealed the after parts of His Glory to Moses; but there was another mountain, at another time when Moses and Elijah were present, together, along with the Lord Jesus Christ when His glory was revealed on Transfiguration Mount

7. God spent time showing Himself after a fashion to Elijah, as He did to Moses; so in later days He did so in the Person of God the Son, Jesus Christ, dwelling among mankind; Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God to mankind
 - a. Hebrews is introduced by this theme, (1:1-2a NAS): *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, ...*
 - b. and John brings the same theme early into his Gospel , 1:14, 18 (NAS): *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.... No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

E. Conclusion

1. for the man, the woman, the child who has never yet found peace with God, forgiveness for their sin, the assurance and joy of a home in heaven, that is why Jesus came; that He might initiate through the work of the Holy Spirit, a new life in those who would turn from their sin and trust in Him: John 1: 12–13 (NAS): *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*
2. and once having thus become a disciple of Christ, even though the desert time may come, God is here, loving, strengthening, consoling, and caring for His child; with the promise, *"I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."* (Hebrews 13:5)

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in *square brackets*. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. “Desert Faith” from Seneca Creek Community Church, Germantown, Maryland, Kerux illustrations #16760