

# elijah

----- a man like us. a call like ours. -----

READING: 1 Kings 17 - 2 Kings 2

Sermon 1

## Introduction

- His name
  - Elijah is the Hebrew *Eliyahu* that means *my God is Yahweh*.
  - His name becomes His ministry focus. Israel's god had become Baal, and Elijah has been sent to turn them back to Yahweh. His goal is that the nation again declare, *my God is Yahweh!!!*
- The reason why God sends prophets?
  - The nation and leaders are in declension and apostate. They have moved away from God and to idols.
  - The leaders are doing a bad job of steering the people back to God
  - For us both the nation and the church are in trouble
    - Nation/nations of the world - anti-God, post-Christian, self-seeking, hostile towards truth, intolerant of biblical values, debauched, sensual, without a conscience, hopeless. Far worse and deceptive than idolatry.
    - Church - syncretistic, striving to be popular and commercial, moving away from truth to be more attractive, contemporary and acceptable.
    - We are allowing the prevailing culture to shape us, instead of representing Kingdom culture in the world!
      - We aren't called to be respectable, acceptable or popular. We have been called to be God's transforming agency in the world.
      - We are called impact our generation with the Gospel, and hand on this heritage to the generations coming behind us!
      - These truths re being challenged or missing in the church today
        - The authority of the scriptures
        - The centrality of Christ
        - The value of godly character
        - The mission of making disciples of every nation
        - The fact that we will receive power and we will be witnesses
  - The prophet calls the nation back to God, and pronounces judgment and punishment on apostasy.

- The state of the nation of Israel

*1 Kings 16:29-34* 29 In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. 30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. 31 And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. 32 He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. 34 In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

- Their king, Ahab, had married a Sidonian who introduced idolatry back into Israel.
- The nation was serving the twin fertility gods Baal and Asherah, the very thing Canaan was punished for originally.
- Ahab was controlled and influenced by his wife, Jezebel.

- The task and message of the prophet

- Seek God's face
- Intercede on behalf of the nation/leaders
- Hear from God and deliver His message of ultimatum: repent or suffer the consequences!

NOTE: Often the prophet gave up his life for his unpopular message!

- Elijah's background

*1 Kings 17:1* 1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

- He literally bursts on the scene from nowhere!
- He was a rough man like John the baptiser
- He came from Gilead, a mountain people, rough and ready.
- Either from the the half tribe of Manasseh or Gad.

- Elijah's historic and prophetic significance

- At one of Israel's darkest hours, he comes to declare exactly what his name means, *my God is Yahweh*, and calling Israel back to their true God from idolatry.
  - He dramatically challenged Israel's declined status quo
  - He attempts to halt the spiritual rot
  - He boldly took on the leaders both political, (king and queen), and spiritual (prophets of Baal).

- He showed us an example of how ordinary people are called to make an extraordinary difference!
- He raised up a successor, Elisha, who would continue his ministry.
- In Jewish tradition, he comes to typify a prophet, and was seen as the greatest prophet. Along with Moses, they would usher in the Messiah. From Malachi's prophecy of Elijah preparing the way of the Messiah, the Jews set a place for 'Elijah' at the Seder table during the Passover. They are waiting for Elijah to come. For us 'Elijah' has come in John the baptiser.
- A man like us. A call like ours.
  - The biblical narrative clearly shows the call of Elijah, without leaving out the humanity and weaknesses of the prophet.

# A man like us and a call like ours

## A man like us

James 5:13-18

*13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*

V17 *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours*

- A powerful spiritual ministry
- Normal and ordinary like us
- But, he was right before God

### - POWERFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

- V16 This summary of the power of prayer is applied to Elijah's life as an example.

ESV *The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working*

NIV *The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective*

KJV *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*

NLT *The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results*

### - NORMAL AND ORDINARY LIKE US

- *nature* - like (similar, resembling) passions (emotions, weaknesses, difficulties). He was a normal and ordinary person like us, suffering the same limitations and weaknesses that we have.
  - He was like us in our limitations, normal and ordinary, but he was right before God.
    - He could rise to the heights of faith in God (1 Kings 18:36-38 where he trusted God to answer his prayer to consume his sacrifice on Mount Carmel) and fall into the depths of despair and depression (1 Kings 19:4 where he asked God to take his life after Jezebel threatened him).
    - He could be brave and courageous at times (1 Kings 18:17-19 where he took on Ahab and the false prophets) and then flee for his life at a threat of danger (1 Kings 19:3 where he fled from Jezebel's threat).
    - He could be selfless (1 Kings 17:8-24 where he helped the widow with flour and oil, and raised her son from the dead) and then filled with self-pity (1 Ki. 19:9-18 where Elijah believed he was the only prophet left).

## - RIGHT BEFORE GOD

- He was weak, normal and ordinary, like us, but was right before God.
  - This gives us great hope! Normal and ordinary people who have inherent weaknesses, are called to do great spiritual exploits. The big thing is to remain right before God. This is not our own effort, but something Christ has accomplished for us, which we receive by faith!

*Philippians 3:7-9 7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.*

- Paul is also a good example of this, and he helps us understand how to access the grace of God in our weaknesses, and not give in to them!

*2 Corinthians 12:1-10 1 I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. 3 And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— 4 and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. 5 On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses – 6 though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. 7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

## A call like ours

Malachi 4

*1 “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.*

*4 “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.*

*5 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 6 And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”*

- His end-time ministry is one of preparing the way for the coming of Jesus

- Begun and fulfilled in John the baptiser, preparing the way for the first coming of Jesus.
  - Continued on in the church, until the great and dreadful day of the Lord, at Jesus' second coming.
  - He preached a message of repentance and turning back to God
  - He challenged the idolatrous status quo
  - He operated in the power of the Holy Spirit
  - He brought reformation and restoration
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- Therefore, we have a call like Elijah's. To turn people back to God before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes - the second coming of Jesus!
    - Great message - the Gospel
    - Great power - the Spirit anoints us with power and strength
    - Great audience - to the world and the church