

## **A Man Like Us - Elijah - Part 1**

*Howard Hendricks*

Introduction.

A. Elijah was a man just like us. (James 5:17)

1. We sometimes think of Bible characters as unreal figures in a museum.
2. But Elijah had problems and discouragements like us.
3. Sermons today lack relevance and realism.
  - a. They scratch people where they don't itch.
  - b. They ask questions no one asks.
  - c. If that is true of my message at least the man Elijah is not so.
  - d. Much of the word of God is biographical because seeing a godly life lived out is great encouragement.

B. There are four values to biographical studies.

1. They leave us in admiration.
  - a. Studying Abraham leaves us thirsty for God who had only an oral revelation of God.
  - b. We have 66 books inspired by the Spirit.
2. They leave us reproved.
  - a. Our own spiritual poverty is seen by contrasting it with great man of the faith.
  - b. It is a mirror to show my need.
3. They reveal that we are left without excuse.
  - a. God desires to sweep away our excuses for not living distinctive lives for God.
  - b. They listened to God and so can we.
4. They leave me with hope.

- a. If God can work in other's lives he can work in ours.
- b. I had a pastor that reminded me of Peter by often placing his foot in his mouth.
  - 1. I realized that if God could do something for Peter he could do something for my pastor.
  - 2. That gives me hope that God can use me too.

I. There are five episodes in Elijah's life but tonight I want to look at the first. (1 Kings 17:5-7)

A. Elijah was a man of confrontation—with Ahab in verse 1, prophesying no rain except by his word.

- 1. Where did he come from?
- 2. To understand his ministry we must understand the historical background.
  - a. Idolatry had spread throughout Israel.
  - b. Ahab and Jezebel must have thought Yahweh was done.
  - c. King Omri did evil in the sight of Yahweh and Ahab followed by marrying Jezebel. (1 Kings 16:30)
  - d. Ahab was dominated by Jezebel, as we in America is today.
  - e. He erected an altar to Baal, sinning more than all the kings before him.
  - f. It was not convenient to godly living, as it never is.
  - g. Christianity did not flourish in prosperity; in fact peace and prosperity hinders Christianity, though it flourishes in persecution.
    - 1. In Vietnam many churches are flourishing.
    - 2. It is difficult to live for Christ in America because we need not distinguish ourselves.
  - h. In Elijah's day he lived in a cave, for fear of persecution, yet he had boldness to prophecy no rain except by his word.
  - i. Perhaps there were clouds but they were empty.

3. I am convinced that God is looking for a man or woman who will be his spokesman for this generation.

4. There is a threefold secret to Elijah's boldness.

a. He believed in the reality of Jehovah.

1. Martin Luther was like Elijah in compassion and in discouragement.

2. Once in great discouragement Luther's wife asked "Is God dead?" And this sparked Luther to bold faith.

3. We would not say God is dead but we often live that way.

b. Elijah believed he was a representative of Jehovah.

1. Mr. Armor of Armor meats said his chief business was to witness for Christ.

2. Some people rejoice to live near other Christians yet we need to be light in a non-Christian world.

3. Elijah stood before King Ahab to speak boldly for Jehovah.

c. Elijah believed in the resources of Jehovah.

1. He believed that Jehovah sent the rain.

2. Moses told Israel that God would withhold rain if they disobeyed him. (Deuteronomy 11:17)

3. Elijah claimed this word for his time.

4. Elijah also prayed earnestly that it might not rain in his day knowing that idolatry resulted in drought. (James 5:17)

5. Can you claim the promise of God as Elijah did?

6. Learn to pray by claiming the promises of God.

7. It is one thing to know the promises of God but another thing to believe

8. God rewards those who diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11)

9. Elijah was a man of private devotion.

1. Success in private leads to success in private devotion to God.

2. Verse 1 shows public success and verses 2-7 reveal his private life.

B. Elijah was a man of concealment.

1. He confronted the king in boldness because he hid himself in God.

a. Verses 2-3 God commands Elijah to hide himself by the brook.

b. God wants many of you to hide yourself in him.

c. This is difficult in view of all that must be done.

d. God is not impressed by what we do but by what we are, for what we are determines what we do.

e. There are so many voices in the world that we cannot hear God.

f. Those who hide in God will be fed by God according to verse 2.

g. God uses ravens to feed his waiting ministers.

h. I used to have quiet times by getting into the word until I read John 4 when Jesus told the woman at the well to worship God in spirit and in truth.

1. The important thing in devotions is not what we get out of it.

2. The important thing is what God gets out of it.

i. Evangelicalism is developing a taste to learn something new instead of developing a taste for knowing and obeying God.

j. Our problem is not the desserts but the meat and potatoes.

k. Philip was also sent to the desert after a successful campaign. (Acts 8)

l. Elijah had another problem when the brook dried up because of his prayer for no rain.

m. Sometimes being in God's will put us in a place of drying brooks.

n. We need to abandon the idea that a Christian has no problems; we have problems but we also have the problem solver.

1. God sends tests in order to help us grow.

2. Dr. Ironsides prayed that a brother would develop patience by asking God to overwhelm him with problems.

2. Elijah realized that he was in the presence of God by the drying brook or in the presence of the king.

a. We must realize that we are representatives of God wherever we are.

b. The will of God is designed for my good and for God's sake.