

Elijah – The Man from Nowhere

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Introduction

Often, we witness people who come from nowhere, step onto the scene, and literally change the landscape of history.

It happened in the business world, Bill Gates first effort at starting a business failed. But he was persistent and the rest is history with Microsoft.

It happened in American history, Benjamin Franklin's parents could not afford his schooling so he had to drop out at age 10. But through voracious reading and self-education, he became one of the greatest minds to ever live.

It happened in the art world, Vincent Van Gogh only sold one painting during his lifetime. After he passed away, his paintings became some of the most famous in the world.

It happened in the world of fiction-writers, Stephen King's first novel was rejected 30 times.

It happened in the entertainment industry, Steven Spielberg was rejected from USC twice.

It happened in baseball when Fernando Valenzuela appeared in 1981 and started playing for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

It happened in football when Tom Brady stepped in for an injured Drew Bledsoe in 2001.

If you dig around in history, you will find all sorts of examples like this... people who seemingly appeared out of nowhere to great success.

Elijah, The Man from Nowhere

While Elijah's accomplishments far supersede what any of these examples demonstrate, there is a reality that somewhere before men arrive on the scene there has been an intense preparation that has taken place somewhere. Elijah was no different.

Elijah was literally the man from nowhere. God grows great souls in places of isolation and obscurity. This was the case with this great prophet. Isolation and obscurity were his school teachers and Gilead was the school house.

Why the isolation? Because courage is often created in moments of isolation. The kind of courage that develops in this place is one that will not lose its voice to the peer pressure of a crowd or a crown that does not value what you value.

There are things that can only come to us when we have been separated from all the noise of the surroundings.

2 Corinthians 6:17 (KJV) Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

Revelation 18:3-4 (KJV)

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. **4** And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Come out of her... my people... Separate yourself from the noise of the surroundings.

Separation from the noise of the rebellious—Num. 16:21 (Korah, Dathan, and Abiram)

Forsake the foolish—Prov. 9:6

Flee from Babylon—Jer. 51:6

Save yourself from this untoward generation—Acts 2:40

Separation from the filthiness of the flesh and the spirit—2 Cor. 7:1

Far too many in our world today do not believe in the power of separation, but there is a prevailing anointing that comes to those who are willing to do so.

Elijah's Times

The times of Elijah were marked by all sorts of sin and folly.

Political upheaval among the kings of Israel.

Assassinations in the palace.

Children being sacrificed to Moloch (they had live babies being sacrificed on altars of fire, we have children being killed in sterile surgical suites).

Here are the descriptions that we find in the Scriptures:

1 Kings 13:33 (KJV) After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places.

The land was filled with “high places.” The pagan gods and idols had infiltrated the land and Jehovah had been pushed out. Our nation is also filled with “high places” and “groves” that give honor and worship to pagan idols.

As we shall see, Elijah's times show us that not much has changed in the avenue of human nature and yet some of our so-called smartest and brightest souls in the world would lead us to believe that we are evolving into a higher state of life.

By the time that Elijah has arrived, the nation of Israel had split off into two kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom whose capitol was in Samaria and the Southern Kingdom which had its capitol in Jerusalem.

The Northern Kingdom had 19 kings and all of them “did evil in the sight of the Lord.” The Southern Kingdom had 17 kings. Eight “followed the Lord their God” but the other nine had no time for the Lord.

The wicked kings hated the prophets and made it their business to make life very rough for them. Many of the prophets were killed because of the uncompromised message they preached to the people.

The kings of Israel were murderous beasts who were nothing more than assassins who would kill to gain the throne. Once they got the throne they would kill the entire family of the dead king.

Consider the actions of the six kings that preceded Ahab:

Jereboam—He started the split in the kingdom. Some 25 times the Bible says he “made Israel to sin.” Corrupted the true worship of Jehovah by creating golden calves for worship. He made the priests the “lowest of the people” (1 Kings 13:33).

Nadab—“Walked in the way of his father.” Assassinated by Baasha after two years.

Baasha—Killed all of Jereboam’s house and was in constant battle with the Southern Kingdom.

Elah—A worthless drunk who only ruled for two years. His drinking was what compromised his reign. He was “drinking himself drunk” when he was killed by Zimri (1 Kings 16:9).

Zimri—After his murder of Elah, he lasted only seven days. But that seven days were murderous as he finished killing off the house of Baasha. His actions caused great rejection by the people and a man named Omri rose up against him. He was the top military officer of the day and he led an attack against Zimri. Zimri retreated to the palace and set it on fire and died in a suicide in the fire (1 Kings 16:18).

Omri—Ruled for twelve years and had a wicked reign... “Did worse than all that were before him” (1 Kings 16:25). He was Ahab’s father.

All the actions of these kings led up to the beginning of Ahab’s reign that is expressed beginning in 1 Kings 16:29:

1 Kings 16:29-33 (KJV)

29 And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. **30** And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. **31** And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. **32** And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. **33** And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

Here was Elijah in the midst of some very troubling times. But it is the grace of God in action that shows that He will send one more prophet, one more preacher, and one more voice to turn Israel back to Jehovah.

How many times has that same situation occurred in our lives? The Lord is always sending some voice of conviction to turn us toward Him. We aren’t any different from the times of Elijah.

Who is your God?

Who will rule your life?

Will you serve Baal or God?

Will it be pagan idols or a living God?

Will it be the god of the lust of the flesh or the God of holiness?

Will sinful passions and practices lead us or will godly reverence and true worship be the focus?

More than ever as our times get darker, our commitment and consecration to godliness and the true matters of the Kingdom must be our focus!

1 Kings 17:1 (KJV) 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.

There are some points in this single verse that changes everything about all that was recorded as history in 1 Kings 16. God is alive... God has a man... God and His man have power!

God Is Alive

It appeared as if Baal had the upper hand. It was an easier way to worship and it appealed to the flesh. Baal worship mixed everything fleshly and sensual into what looked like worship. Ahab had even built a house, put up altars, and cleared out groves for Israel.

Great stability was in Israel because Ahab's rule lasted for twenty-two years. Politically, economically, and militarily all was well.

Everything about Jehovah was mocked and ridiculed. For every bit of their mockery toward God, it seemed like nothing happened to them. There wasn't a hint of judgment and Ahab extended the Kingdom more than any other ruler than Solomon.

"See here we are living the dream!" Or so they seemed to think. That is what happens to a heart that becomes blind and cannot discern the mercy of God. They were confusing the mercy and longsuffering of God as a proof that God didn't care or that He was dead.

Delay in judgment always plays out this way. People who are involved in their sinful attractions have minds that are so twisted. When Baal worship is the focus that is what takes place. Paul noted a pattern in the thinking of people whose worship is warped:

Romans 1:21-25 (KJV)

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. **22** Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, **23** And

changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. **24** Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: **25** Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Their foolish heart was darkened. They thought they knew who God was but because of that mental and spiritual confusion, they literally changed the identity of God into something else. That is taking place today. There are a myriad of social issues that are being touted as what is right when in reality they are wrong... deadly wrong, spiritually wrong, and eternally wrong. Isaiah put it well also:

Isaiah 5:20-21 (KJV)

20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! **21** Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

The Bible is an incredible book, because it contains the literal words of God. 1 Kings 16 paints up a dark backdrop, but 1 Kings 17 changes the whole disposition of the picture with a small little word... "And". That word is a very powerful word, because it means that there is an addition to what otherwise would be the same.

God had a prophet so that meant that He was alive and He was quite well and aware of the matters that were brewing in Israel. God alive then and alive now. We may be distressed about the sin and the direction that the entire world seems to be taking but God is still alive.

Psalms 121:3-4 (KJV)

3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. **4** Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

God still has men and women in solid Bible-believing, tongue-talking, and separated from this world churches! Don't be discouraged by what you may be seeing in our world. It was prophesied that this was the way it was supposed to happen.

God Has a Man

God is alive... God has a man. "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead..."

God sent a prophet to Israel. Later in the interaction with Ahab there would be a caustic accusation that would pour out of Ahab's mouth:

1 Kings 18:17 (KJV) And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

The office of the prophetic is perilous and will open the floodgates of spiritual warfare against anyone who endeavors to do what the Lord has called them to do. The devil does everything within his power to create alliances that attempt to ruin revivals.

It is the grace of God that reaches for nations, for churches, and for individuals, but that reaching grace always is accompanied by a voice that will denounce sin. Those whose voice are on the frontline of the battle can expect to be accused of being unloving and judgmental.

Look at some of the areas that Elijah had to be involved with and you can see the great price tags that are often associated with spiritual greatness.

They have to walk alone.

They will be scorned and ridiculed.

They know about mistreatment and persecution.

They know what it is like for their words to be ignored.

They know that they will have to have the hide of a rhinoceros because of the criticism.

They know what it is like to have negative words always being spoken about them.

The predominant matter that they will learn is that their office is of a divine calling, but it must be walked out with excellence in a very earthy setting. This has always been God's way... For every Ahab and Jezebel, He has an Elijah.

As a Holy-Ghost filled believer, you must sometimes walk the same path that Elijah walked. You will be scorned, mocked, ridiculed, and talked about, but your witness is needed more than ever before.

There is another hint of what it was that sustained Elijah all through his prophetic calling and the same principle holds true for us even now... As the Lord God liveth, before whom I stand!

This speaks of consecration. That is an old word that you heard a lot in the 70's and some of the '80's, but not so much now. Consecration, dedication, holiness, separation, devotion, loyalty, sacred, godly, reverent, and Elijah was willing to let this trait seep into his soul.

To stand before God informs Ahab that he was a committed servant of the Lord.

To stand before God means showing the Lord he was ready for directions.

To stand before God meant he was not a chameleon to change colors as the opposition changed.

To stand before God meant he was not afraid to show where his allegiance lay.

To stand before God meant that his conscience was pure from sinful things.

To stand before God meant that he was willing to take a position on unpopular societal choices.

To stand before God meant he had to have courage to be in the minority.

If there ever were time when men, women and churches needed to stand before the Lord, the time is now.

In 1865, near the end of the War Between the States, the Federal and Confederate lines were strung out for some miles sought and southwest of Petersburg, Virginia. George Pickett had moved against troops on the Federal left, his men inflicting 1800 casualties. Pickett had then withdrawn to a location called Five Forks, apparently to General Robert E. Lee's chagrin. He was told to hold Five Forks at all hazards (since it protected Confederate railroad transport). General Pickett was confident that his attack the previous day had shocked the Union troops sufficiently to make them delay any attack upon his position. He did, however, place his men in the proper defensive position and had no doubt he could maintain his place even if Phil Sheridan did attack. He received an invitation to dinner from one of his colleagues who had been lucky catching shad in the

Nottoway River. So Pickett, along with cavalry commander Fitzhugh Lee, eagerly accepted and went behind lines. They didn't tell anybody where they were going—why divide delicious fish too many ways? So, when Sheridan attacked—and attack he did—no one knew where to find either Pickett or Fitzhugh Lee. They were absent three hours at a shad bake. When Pickett returned to his division half its members had been shot or captured. (Adapted from 1 Kings—The Wisdom and the Folly, Dale Ralph Davis, pp. 202-203).

Can you see how important it is for a man to simply do his job?

God and His Man Have Power

God is alive... God has a man... God and His man will have power.

Because Elijah had aligned himself with God and not the other way around... Be careful that you don't get your preferences and the prophetic mixed up. We can think that we are doing the will of God when we get God lined up with our preferences, but the real test of discipleship is allowing my life to be in orientation with God's plan.

Because Elijah was in tune with God, when he spoke it was literally under the power of God. There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

This drought lasted 3 ½ years (Luke 4:25; James 5:17). By the time they had come to end of it, it was literally as dry as bone dust. There hadn't been any dew in the morning and there weren't any showers of relief that came to them.

The mention of dew is an interesting one. The presence of dew was the sign of blessing (Gen. 27:28; Deut. 33:13; Hosea 14:5) and this was not lost on Israel. They were aware the lack of rain would be devastating to their crops, but the lack of dew meant that the blessing of God was receding from them.

A drought of rain can be troubling enough in a man's life, but lack of dew is when he starts to sense that there is a lack of God's blessing in his life. It can place a heavy weight on the mind and spirit.

This drought was intended to do some things to Israel:

Encourage them to repent.

Expose Baal.

Exalt Jehovah.

It is hard to draw men to repentance when Ahab's rule had been so prosperous to them. But while their purses were full their souls were empty. God is more concerned with spiritual purity than He is economic power.

While Elijah was being criticized for his message of repentance the deeper truth was that God was behind every bit of it. It would reach its height of confrontation when Elijah and all the prophets of Baal gathered at Carmel. At that point, Elijah would prove to be victorious because God and His man had a reserve of spiritual power behind them.

God Will Qualify

Elijah was a man from nowhere who had the right qualifications. May God help all of us to be more concerned about our qualifications than our opportunities.

There are some hints throughout the life of Elijah that proves his qualifications:

Let it be known...that I have done all these things at thy word (1 Kings 18:36)
Elijah prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by a space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain (James 5:17-18).

James 5:16 (KJV) Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

More than anything, I want to be taking care of my qualifications instead of looking to my opportunities.