

The Days of Elijah

During the transfiguration of Jesus on earth (cf. Matt 17:1-13), there were two figures that stood with Jesus, talking to him. These two figures were Moses and Elijah. They represented the Law and the Prophets, which was a shorthand way of referring to the Old Testament. God’s law was given through Moses, and Elijah was the first of many prophets who would bring God’s pronouncements to his people.

In our new sermon series, we are focusing on the life of Elijah. His name means “my God is YHWH”, which already gives us an indication of the kind of person he is. But he lived during a time when the people of God were rebellious, hard-hearted, and disobedient. How is Elijah going to persevere on as God’s prophet during times like these? To better understand him and his life, we need to take a look at the kind of world Elijah lived in. That is what we’ll be doing in this session – to have a brief but accurate overview of what the people and king are like during Elijah’s years. We will focus on Elijah himself from the next session onwards.

Launch

- 1) What do you think is the role of God’s prophets here on earth?

THE DAYS OF ELIJAH

Read 1 Kings 16:8-34. When you read it, take the opportunity to fill out the table below.

Some background information: The nation at this point has been split into two, the northern kingdom (confusingly called Israel), and the southern kingdom (called Judah). In the northern kingdom were the ten tribes (Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, Dan, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, Gad, and Simeon), and the tribe of Benjamin and Judah were in Judah, along with the Levitical priests.

Judah (king) – Year of Reign	Israel (king)	What did this king do? (Summary)
Asa – 26 th year	Elah	Killed by Zimri
Asa – 27 th year	Zimri	

- 2) What is the common theme in the reign of these kings?

- 3) What do you think life is like under the leadership and rule of these kings?

- 4) What did YHWH feel about the reign of these kings? (v26, 33)

- 5) What do you think the people will react/respond to those who are faithful to YHWH during these times?

- 6) Compare and contrast the situation that Christians are in today in the Western world to Elijah's day. What are the similarities and differences?
 - a. How does that affect the faithfulness of Christians today?

- 7) How can you remain faithful to God in a world that is hostile to God? What are some practical things that you can do in your daily life to help you?
 - a. What do you think are the major points of pressure on you as a Christian today?

Conclusion

The books of 1-2 Kings describe the period of the monarchy in Israel (970-586BC). These books set out to provide an explanation of Israel's later kingship in terms of the vision outlines in Deuteronomy. This is to encourage the readers so that they can stand firm on their faith in YHWH who controls both nature and history. While the world becomes more and more hostile to YHWH, he still stands sovereign over all nations. This is where Elijah comes into the picture. He served YHWH in the northern kingdom of Israel, where the kings are rebellious and unfaithful. They aroused the anger of YHWH because of their evilness.

It is into this world that Elijah was called to speak the word of God. As we will see in future sessions, he does it with faithfulness and courage, but not without his own struggles. His world is not dissimilar to our world today, where the concept of individual autonomy reigns supreme. How can we live in a world like this as followers of Christ? Are we destined to be the minority in our society, despised and rejected by the rest? The life of Elijah will speak and encourage us in our faith, showing us that our God is in control and sovereign over all.