

The Story (15): The Days of Elijah

(1 Kings 17)

I. Introduction

- A. The song *Days of Elijah* reminds us that God is working in us today
1. He once worked through Elijah, Ezekiel and David. Now he has us
 - a. It also reminds us we live in the last days (a week or millennia)
 - b. God is working today through his people to accomplish His will.
 2. Paul says what's written in OT is for our learning (**Rom 15:4**)
 - a. These OT stories teach us about God's love— *it never gives up*
 - b. They teach about how powerful God **is**, not how powerful He **was**
 - c. We serve the God “*Who was and who is and who is to come.*”
- B. As we continue *The Story*, we come to the prophets. The first is Elijah
1. If Elijah isn't on your short list of great OT characters, he should be
 - a. In **Matthew 17**, Jesus is “transfigured” into a spiritual form
 - 1) He talks with Moses and Elijah—about what? His mission?
 - 2) Do Moses and Elijah represent “*law and the prophets?*”
 - b. Jesus points to coming of Elijah as proof he is Messiah (**Mk 9:13**)
 - c. Paul see Elijah as example of how God never gives up (**Rom 11:2**)
 - d. James uses Elijah as an example of the power of prayer (**Jam 5:17**)
 2. No matter how you stack it, Elijah was a key character in *The Story*
- C. Last week, we saw Jeroboam set up idol worship at Dan and Bethel
1. It was pragmatic; he didn't want Israel renewing ties to Judah
 - a. He replicated the worship of God—sacrifices, festivals, priests
 - b. He did his best to completely supplant the worship of Yahweh.
 2. Kings who followed Jeroboam continued this legacy (**1 Ki 15:34**)
 - a. That is until one king came along—Ahab (**1 Kings 16:30-31**)
 - 1) Ahab takes the sins of Jeroboam and raised them a notch
 - 2) The kings that follow Ahab are compared to Ahab's sin
 - b. Would send fire and brimstone on Ahab; no, He send Elijah!
 3. So how did Elijah do? Well, we didn't just sing “*Days of Ahab!*”

II. The Days of Elijah: Strange Beginning (1 Kings 17:1-7)

A. Elijah is a man who needs no introduction—and gets none (**1 Ki 17:1**)

1. **First**, name Elijah means “*Yahweh is God.*” Perfect name, right?

a. The nation of Israel wasn’t sure who was God; Elijah’s parents did

b. Maybe God renamed him when he became prophet (*He does that*)

1) Factoid: What did Israel shout when Elijah’s sacrifice burned?

2) “*The Lord—he is God!*” They basically shouted Elijah’s name

c. His name was his message; he was called to say “*Yahweh is God*”

2. **Second**, he’s a Tishbite. Who’s a Tishbite? Someone from Tishbe

a. What is Tishbe? Where the Tishbites are from! *We don’t know!*

b. Text only locates it in Gilead, which was in the Transjordan region

3. **Third**, he appears out of nowhere to pronounce God’s judgement

a. This is pretty much the job description of prophet. *Not a pastor!*

b. His opening salvo is a shot across Ahab’s bow—“No more rain”

c. Ahab dreads these pop-in visits. He sees Elijah as enemy (**21:20**).

B. So Elijah here draws first blood in his holy war for the soul of Israel

1. King Asa ruled Judah 41 years; Jehosaphat who ruled for 25 years.

a. Both father and son were devout followers of the one true God

b. For most of its history to this point, Judah is following God

2. Elijah could have left North for the South (*always a good practice*)

a. He could preach to folks who already love God & want to do right

b. Not job of prophet! He’s called to people who don’t want to hear

1) God told Jeremiah going in that people would not listen to him

2) Elijah had the same deal; he preaches fearlessly & relentlessly

3. That’s what makes this first Elijah story interesting (why I chose it)

a. Elijah **first job** was to preach a message of gloom and doom

b. His second job, to quote Monty Python, was “*Run away!*” (**11:2-6**)

1) He goes toe to toe with Ahab, and then he runs and hides!

2) He goes to the birds... literally. Not what we would expect

c. God gave him a hard job, but it’s not easy job with smooth sailing

d. This won’t be the last time Elijah must hide from Ahab and Jezebel

C. Chuck Swindoll compares Elijah's time in Kerith to spiritual boot camp.

1. I've never been in the military; that makes me a minority here
 - a. Why do you start a military career in boot camp or basic training?
 - 1) Is it to make you so mad and miserable that combat is a relief
 - 2) It's training, but it's to break you down so you can be built up
 - b. Do for three years, Elijah had to rely on God hiding from Ahab
 - 1) He drank from stream not knowing if it'd dry up in drought
 - 2) During a time of famine and hunger, he was fed by ravens.
 - 3) When both dried up, and he had to depend on God (**17:7-9**)
2. At the beginning of **1 Kings 17**, Elijah is called "*the Tishbite.*"
 - a. By the end of the chapter, he's seen as "*man of God*" (**17:24**).
 - b. For him to become a man of God, he had to go through Kerith
3. Hiding out in a wilderness is a strange way to begin a great ministry!
 - a. But it was during those years that Elijah learned to trust on God.
 - b. That's critical! Much of the time, Elijah has no one but God
 - 1) His job as prophet was to proclaim that "the Lord is God"
 - 2) Before he can preach it, he has to know it for himself
 - 3) Sometimes you can't really know that until you are at Kerith

D. In order to live our faith today, we must decide that "*the Lord is God.*"

1. Like Israel, we live in a culture where there are a thousand gods
 - a. They all claim to be the true way to happiness, success, meaning
 - b. We hear siren song each time turn on TV or open Facebook
 - c. False gods claim to be the true god, and they want to be our God
2. That means we need to know the Lord is God and is God alone
 - a. Sometimes the way God shows us that is not pretty (**1 Pet 1:6-7**)
 - b. God can't make omelets without breaking some eggs (**Jam 1:2-4**)
 - c. We should never think our time at Kerith is strange (**1 Pet 4:12-13**)
3. This is so clear while in church; it doesn't seem so clear in real life.
 - a. God assures us that growth and character come through difficulty.
 - b. Struggle teaches us endurance and to know that God is really God

III. Conclusion

A. In book *Angels and Demons*, Dan Brown has this interesting exchange

1. Chartrand, a police lieutenant, asks a priest why God allows evil
Terrible things happen in this world. Human tragedy seems like proof that God could not possibly be both all-powerful and well-meaning. If He loves us and has the power to change our situation, He would prevent our pain, wouldn't He?"
 - a. The priest asks him to imagine he has an 8-year-old son he loves
 - b. Would he want what's best for the child? To be protected and safe?
 - c. Then the priest asks, "*So would you let your son skateboard?"*
2. Chartrand says that of course he would allow his son to skateboard
 - a. Priest says doing so mean you are allowing him to fall and hurt
So although you have the power to interfere and prevent your child's pain, you would choose to show your love by letting him learn his own lessons?"
 - b. Chartrand says, "*But pain is a part of growing up. It's how we learn"*
 - c. The priest nods and smiles, "*Exactly.*" He has made his point

B. God uses hard times of draught and famine to let allow us to grow

1. Difficulty and struggle is the mortar from which God builds faith
 - a. Pain is part of growing up; we can't learn without experiencing it
 - 1) Periods of pain is not a sign that God doesn't love us. He does
 - 2) Sometimes we must sit and wait for the ravens... and for God
 - b. It is through times of waiting that we learn to be people of God.
2. That is our challenge for this morning... Where are you today?
 - a. Have you been to Kerith and emerged with a new view of faith?
 - 1) Like Elijah, you're in position to know "*The Lord is God.*"
 - 2) Now it's your job is to share that faith perspective with others!
 - b. Maybe you're at Kerith now? In the middle of hardship and pain
 - 1) Know that your struggle isn't a sign God has abandoned you
 - 2) God will meet you there to create something new and strong
 - 3) Lift your eyes and look for the ravens... and for God's grace
3. We all need to know "*Elijah!*" We need to know "*The Lord is God*"