

Elijah

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The career of Elijah is one of the most dramatic and significant among the prophets in Scripture. His life is characterized by miracles, wonders, memorable showdowns with the enemy, and deep attachment to the God he served. He was sent by God to northern Israel during the dark days of the wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. His message of truth, and call to worship the true God alone, would be a message repeated for ages to come. When sin and idolatry abound in any land, the message of Elijah needs to be heard in every generation. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the remarkable life and ministry of Elijah.

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Kings 17–2 Kings 13

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the timeless message of the prophet Elijah.
2. To define the multiple roles prophets played during the years of the divided kingdom.
3. To highlight the major events in the life of the prophet Elijah.

QUOTATIONS

For the dramatic suddenness, the exceeding boldness, and the amazing character of it, there are few of a like nature in sacred history. Unannounced and unattended, a plain man, dressed in humble garb, appeared before Israel's apostate king as the messenger

of Jehovah and the herald of dire judgment. No one in the court would know much, if anything, with the keys of heaven in his hand. Such are often the witnesses to His truth which God has employed. At His bidding they come and go: not from the ranks of the influential and learned do they issue. They are not the products of this world system, nor does the world place any laurels on their brow.

—A.W. Pink

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The last prophecy of the Old Testament refers to the prophet Elijah and the day of the Lord.
 1. “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 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” (Malachi 4:4–6).
 2. The Lord promises to send his prophet Elijah before the great day of the Lord.
 3. Modern Jews leave a chair empty during the celebration of the Passover for the coming of Elijah.
 4. John the Baptist denied that he was Elijah.
 5. Jesus identified John the Baptist with the prophecy from Malachi in Matthew 11:14 and 17:10–12.
 6. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah.
- B. Elijah ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire and did not die.
 1. He is anticipated as the herald of the coming Messiah because he did not die.
 2. This is the role that John the Baptist plays in the spirit of Elijah’s ministry.
 3. Elijah appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration.
 4. Moses personified the Old Testament law and Elijah personified the Old Testament prophet.
- C. The prophetic office emerges in importance with the career of Elijah.
 - Elijah is sent by God to northern Israel during the dark days of the wicked King Ahab.

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- D. Many Christians mistake prophets as little more than fortunetellers or predictors of the future.
1. The primary task of the prophets was to be a “forth-teller.”
 2. The prophets spoke the absolute truth to the king and the people.
 3. The prophets were often lonely, despised, brutalized, persecuted, and murdered because of their unique calling as the conscience of the people.
 4. The prophets also prosecuted the nation for violating the covenant made at Sinai and warned of the impending punishment.
- E. Elijah was described by King Ahab as the “troubler of Israel.”
- God brings judgment for Ahab’s sins by answering Elijah’s prayer and imposing a severe three-year drought on the land.
- F. Elijah challenges Ahab and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18.
1. Elijah reassigns the blame for Israel’s trouble on Ahab and his idol worship.
 2. Ahab’s wicked queen, Jezebel, had been importing priests of Baal into the land of Israel.
 3. Elijah challenges the power of Baal and his priests on Mount Carmel asking how long they would waver between two faiths.
 4. Elijah challenged the religious syncretism of Israel.
 5. Elijah was the only prophet of God, and 450 priests of Baal accepted Elijah’s challenge on Mount Carmel.
 6. The priests of Baal cry out in vain for their god to bring fire down from heaven.
 7. Elijah rebuilds the altar of God, summons the people, and three times orders the altar soaked with water.
 8. He prays that the Lord will show Himself to be God. Instantly fire from heaven descends and consumes the wood, stones, and sacrifice.
 9. The people fall on their faces and cry out, “The LORD, he *is* God; the LORD, he *is* God” (1 Kings 18:39).
- G. Miracles surround the life of Elijah, including confronting Ahab and raising a child from the dead.

1. Elijah and John the Baptist both called the king and the people to repent and follow the law of God.
 2. The church is called to utter prophetic criticism when the nation strays from the law of God.
- H. When sin and idolatry abound in any land, the message of Elijah needs to be heard in every generation.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Which prophet's ministry marked the emergence of the prophetic office in all its significance in Israel?
2. According to Dr. Sproul, what was the primary task of the prophet? Were prophets in ancient Israel more likely to be beloved or hated?
3. According to Ahab, who was the "troubler of Israel?" Who was the "troubler," according to Elijah (1 Kings 18:17-19)?
4. Summarize Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40). Why do you think the prophet uses so much water in preparation of his sacrifice?
5. Why is Elijah significant in Malachi 4:4-6? How is this prophecy fulfilled in the lifetime of Jesus (Matt. 17:1-13; Luke 1:5-17)?
6. In the transfiguration, what did Moses personify? What did Elijah personify? Why would God have these two figures appear with Jesus at that time?
7. According to Dr. Sproul, how does the church serve a prophetic role today?

DISCUSSION

1. According to Hebrews 1:1-4, should we expect prophets like Elijah to be ministering today? Why or why not?
2. God granted Elijah a great victory over the prophets of Baal, even though, humanly speaking, he was outnumbered. Has the Lord ever granted you success against overwhelming odds? What were the circumstances?
3. In what practical ways can your local church serve your local community as a prophet in warning of God's judgment and preaching His grace?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Davis, Dale Ralph. *2 Kings: The Power and Fury*
House, Paul. *1, 2 Kings*
Pink, A.W. *Elijah*