

The molding of Elijah I Kings 17:1-24

KSBC - 8/14/2011
Pastor Tim Depue

Throughout history nations go through good times and hard times /War and Peace / Prosperity and Economic Loss. Even America has had the swing of the pendulum in these areas.

- Roaring twenties / Depression of the thirties
- 100 years of peace with the Monroe Doctrine / two World Wars

During these times there was also spiritual swings that are not always conveniently linked with what is more readily seen or measured by ledgers or body counts

Along with these swings on the world stage there can be ups and downs in our personal lives that can come from different areas:

- Physical - Sickness, fatigue, need a vacation, out of shape before soft-ball practice
- Economic - Gas going up, inflation, reduced income, everything breaking all at once, loss of job, company closing, stock market crash,
- Socially - Children making wrong choices, marriage problems, personal choices that bring disgrace,
- Politically - Governmental decisions/ laws that work against your beliefs/values, taxes
- Spiritually - Persistent opposition in the work place, temptations, cultural shift away from
Judaean-Christian ethics/foundation

Either way, through personal challenges or circumstances that come from wider circles, it is often during the hard times that God accomplishes the most rewarding/ life changing tasks in our life.

- Marriages made stronger
- Growth in stewardship skills
- Development of true/strong friendships
- Wayward children come back to God
- Even broader influences to God's Glory (School board, workplace, politics, national...)
- Faith can grow; see God's plan/work clearer

In scripture God has preserved many good times for us to see His goodness in action. He has also preserved examples of bad times for us to learn from and to encourage us.

King David

- Time of strong national unity, prosperity, expansion,
- Spiritually - high devotion to God, spiritual vitality, easy to live right before God (socially acceptable)

Omri Household Kingdom (a few generations later)

- Time of strength, cities being built, military strength, advanced architecture in defenses and the arts, society was positive,
- Spiritually - dead, Baal and idol worship rampant, state supported religion (eventually state sponsored), hard to live or have a testimony for God, persecution (even death)

For N. Israel the entrance of Elijah came when life was good but spiritually dying.

- Cultural influence from Egypt and Mesopotamia evidenced in the ruins of the time
- Ivory inlays and the "ivory house" built by Ahab (1 Kings 22:39)
- Advanced defenses for cities
 - Tunnels dug through rock to springs for water, advanced tech. for war,
 - Bought the mound for Samaria and built the capital
- Advanced offensive weaponry

A time of political, financial military, social prosperity, but spiritual decay.

1 Kings 17 opens with the introduction of a prophet named Elijah.

Elijah - Combination of Yahweh (Jah) and God (Eli)

- One of the most colorful characters in the OT
- Appears suddenly, little history known (**17:1**)
 - Tishbite, Possibly a category or class of people that were alien residents, accepted as permanent settlers, possibly proselytes.
 - Inhabitants/ sojourners of Gilead, near the desert's edge a hilly region just east of Jordan, (Jabesh Gilead?) Wild, forested, largely unsettled during this period
- Hairy man that wore a leather girdle (2 Kings 1:8)
- Associated with fiery judgment
 - Known for the Mt. Carmel contest (chapter 18)
 - Called down fire on enemies (2 Kings 1)
 - Taken to Heaven via a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2)
 - Seen with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration (Luke 9)
 - Tribulation prophet in Jerusalem, judgment fire out of his mouth (Rev. 11)

In comparison to other prophets we see in scripture, his ministry was a water shed ministry for the nation of Israel.

Prior to Elijah

- The glory days of King David and Solomon are in the past,
- The kingdom is divided, 10 tribes to the north and 2 in the south
- N. kingdom progressively moves from God, increasingly evil
 - Jeroboam established the worship of idols (golden calves) as the state supported religion (**12:25-33, 13:33**)
 - House of Omri is established as the royal family (16:22)
 - Ahab (son of Omri) becomes King (16:29)
 - His reign is seen the climax of disrespect of Jehovah/God
 - He marries Jezebel, a Sidonian and pursues worship of Baal (16:31)
 - He established Baal worship as the national religion (16:32)
 - Built an alter and temple in Samaria, capital city
 - Jezebel sought to eliminate the worship of Jehovah (18:4)
 - Worship of Jehovah was closest to extinction than at any time, before or after.

After Elijah

- All Kings considered, some even consulted the prophets of God
- Never was the extinction of Jehovah worship threatened again
- His fiery zeal broke the power of Baal worship,
 - Though it was around until after the captivity, it never gained the same level of influence

Public ministry - was of judgment, fiery, in your face, can't miss him

Private ministry - Mal. 4:6

- ministry of reconciliation, softening hearts, turning father toward children and children toward fathers

1 Kings 17

As you read through 1 Kings, this chapter stands out as an interruption in the story line. One could easily skip from 17:3 to the next chapter and not miss a beat in the story of the nation. But in this chapter we see God taking Elijah through three different experiences each designed to help prepare him for greater ministry. Each designed to grow his trust in God.

First, Elijah speaks the word of God (**vs.1**)

- Before Ahab, probably in the capital city of Samaria
- Based on **Deut. 11:13-17**
- Nothing new only a reminder of results of obedience / disobedience.
- This was a direct challenge to Baal, god of land and fertility

Lesson # 1 - God will Provide (vs. 2-7)

Elijah is sent into hiding with no preparations.

- Sent to Cherith means “the cutting place”
 - This may have been for his safety from Jezebel and others
 - coerce/torture him to call off drought
 - reminded of Moses, Paul, others that God sent away to prepare them for a greater ministry
- Effects of the drought were slow but sure
- Brook starts drying up, soon gone
- Even though he was obedient to God, he was personally getting squeezed

Yet there were reminders of God’s promise to provide food and water.

- There was water, for the moment
- Birds/food came like clockwork, easy to get used to the provisions of God

From this first experience, we can see:

1. The most basic needs of life are in God’s control.
Knowing God’s judgment would affect him, he needed to learn that God would provide.
2. Personal trust in God is needed before you can influence others.
During this time of solitude, God stretched his faith as the resources dwindled.
Elijah needed a strong personal faith/trust in God before he could stand before the nation.

Lesson # Two - God will Protect (vs. 8-16)

Elijah told to move:

- Called to Zerephath, the noun form means “crucible, place of refining”
- Had bread and meat, now down to crackers
- This act of obedience by Elijah left him exposed to harm and death
 - The search parties of Ahab (18:10)
 - The death squads of Jezebel (18:4)

Results:

- Never discovered, protected from death/harm
- Continued reminders of God’s care through daily provision
- Learned that God ruled over natural processes (needed at Mt. Carmel later)
- Encouragement from the widow’s example of “child like obedience “
- He could have claimed Ps. 31:19-20, protection from harm

From this second experience, we can see:

1. Obedience to God can involve risk, but God is our protector.
Knowing his life was hunted, Elijah needed to know that his protection was not in numbers or the ability to hide, but in God. (Ps. 61:3, Pr. 18:10)
2. God’s resources are limitless.
Both food and safety came from the least expected places. God showed Elijah that He was not limited by what could be explained. This was needed later on Mt. Carmel.

Lesson #Three - God’s Word is True (vs.17-24)

Elijah put to the Test

- Death of Widow’s Son
- Elijah’s safety and provision was now being threatened
- Elijah call to God
- Child is revived
- Widow becomes a true believer

From this third experience, we can see:

1. We can depend on God's promises.
To have confidence in his ministry, Elijah needed to know that even when circumstances changed, God would not change his mind.
God's word / His plans will not be turned back (**Is. 55:11**)
2. Our faith and trust in God affects those around us.
God used Elijah's faith to show the widow her sin and point her to personal faith in Him.

Conclusion:

- Elijah learned that when the time came God would honor His Word and the rain would come. He would be secure regardless of the circumstances.
- God would preserve Elijah until the end of this spiritual battle and would preserve the testimony of God before the nation.
- Elijah went on to be the watershed prophet for the nation Israel.
- God used the lessons of Provision, Protection and Promises to mold Elijah to become the prophet that He needed to accomplish the task of turning the nation around, back to true worship.

Take aways:

1. Our personal lives are the foundation for ministry.
 - a. Time with God is essential
2. Our needs are God's concern.
 - a. As we obey God's word, He provides when and what we need.
3. Our protection is God's concern.
 - a. If God be for us, who can be against us?
4. God is on display I our lives.
 - a. Is our faith and trust showing?