

ELIJAH WAS A MAN JUST LIKE US

We are going to talk about someone in the Bible we all know about. We put him on a standard way above us. We might think that he is someone no one else could be like. Yet, the Bible specifically says he was just like us. I am talking about Elijah. If you have studied the Bible, you know about the amazing miracles this man did. James 5:17 says that Elijah was a man just like us. When he prayed, it did not rain for 3 ½ years. When he prayed again, it rained and there were flowers. Elijah was a man just like us. Today we are going to study his life.

There are many people who have done great exploits. Think about David killing a bear with his bare hands. We think that could not happen. Yet David was not an angel and he was not Jesus. He was a human. How do these people do these great exploits like this? How do they do it? In Daniel the Bible says, "The people that know their God will be strong and do exploits." Would you like to be like that? I would like to be one of those people.

How was Elijah like us and how was he different? The main thing is that Elijah knew how to tap into God's power. When my husband got filled with the Holy Spirit, he had to learn that it is not enough to be a good person and it is not enough to live by the laws that God has set down. That is not enough. You cannot really do what God wants you to do. Why not? Because only Jesus can do the miracles. Who does miracles? Jesus. Who does them through you? Jesus. It is not you. You have to have the faith to believe, but Jesus is the one who does it through you.

In order to be filled with the Holy Spirit and really walk in the power of God, you have to realize it gets down to letting Jesus live His life through you. That is all it is. It is not you suddenly getting supernatural power and becoming superman. Without the power of God going through you, you cannot do anything. With the power of God going through you, you can do everything. All things are possible to any of us. Do some people have special favor with God where they would get to do these things and regular people do not? No. God says in His Word, "I do not have favorites." He has callings and gifting, but any of us can do anything. Think about Peter. He was a fisherman. He caught fish for a living, and cleaned them. Think about how fish smell. Yet, he walked on water! Have you ever thought about the miracle that God let Peter do was related to his ordinary life? What was Peter's ordinary life? It was being around water and lakes, and dealing with storms. God let Peter do a miracle that affected and involved his everyday life. God will do that with you, too. Elijah was a man just like us.

(Look at this picture of the prophet Elijah. You might think they look different, but they do not.) I know a lot of modern-day prophets. One of them is a man named Rick Joiner. You might know him. What does he look like? Does he look weird or different? He has gray hair and has one of those goatees and mustaches that is salt and pepper gray. He is just an ordinary man that God has called to be a prophet. Chuck Pierce is another modern-day prophet. He went to Texas A&M. He was just an Aggie, but God called him to be a prophet.

I was walking through my house one day and I had a vision. I was walking through the den into the kitchen and I was thinking about God or the works of God. Suddenly, I had a mental picture, like a movie, that we were all in heaven. God was showing up on a big screen, like a movie screen, everything that had happened in the Bible. He was showing all of the incredible miracles, everything that Elijah did. He did many great things. We were all watching it, and I was amazed. I was saying over and over "Wow!" A man was sitting next to me doing the same thing. I turned to him and said "That is amazing, isn't it." He said, "Yes, it is." I asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Elijah." He was just as amazed as we are when God does that wonder stuff through us. He was just a man, just like us.

Names in the Bible had meaning. Our names have meanings, too. Have you ever found out what your name means? My name, Betty, comes from Elizabeth, and it means consecrated to God. I think about that a lot. What did Elijah's name mean? It means "My lord is Jehovah." If you know the story of Elijah, you know that is what he spent his whole life saying "Jehovah is Lord, serve Him." This story took place in maybe the ninth century before Jesus. It was about 2900 years ago, before the Dead Sea Scrolls were even hidden. He was a Tishbite. That was an area in Gilead. How was he a regular man? He ate, slept, worked, and got hungry. He was famous for his stand for God. He paid a price to know God. Some people are different from others because they pay the price to know God. They go through what you have to go through to know God. It is not easy. One time, I heard T.D. Jakes say "People come to me and say, 'Bishop, lay your hands on me that I can get your anointing.'" He said, "I want to look at them

and say 'Do you want to go through what I went through to get this anointing?'" There is a price to pay for serving Jesus.

What did Elijah look like? In II Kings, they were asking, "What did he look like?" It says, "They answered him, 'He was a hairy man and he had a girdle of leather around his loins.'" The man says, "It is Elijah, the Tishbite." They knew what he looked like. You have seen men that have a lot of hair on their body, on their back, and they wear unusual clothes. That is all Elijah was doing. He had figured out how he could get around the best. He had a girdle of leather around him. Have you ever thought about why he dressed that way? Is there anyone today that dresses a little bit unusual that really serves God? Have you ever seen the television show "Dog, the Bounty Hunter". That man is a new Christian and has made some mistakes. I believe he has a heart for God. I have watched how kind he is to people he is picking up to take to jail. I think he really cares about them. I believe that he and his wife really care about them. He looks strange. He has long blond hair that is bleached and dresses kind of wild. You do not have to dress in a suit and tie, or a pretty dress. You can be who you are. If you are unique, just be unique. It does not affect anything in your service for God.

We have talked about how he was like us. How was he different? He had strong faith that he had to develop. Faith has to be developed. He was able to proclaim before God and a king what God told him to say. The king had the power of life and death in his hands. Sometimes you get into a situation where it feels like your boss or someone in your life has the power of life and death. They could cause you to lose your job or they might cause you to lose your life. You have to realize that you have to be at a place where you can stand before God and man and say what God told you to say.

This second Scripture is an example of how bold Elijah was. In I Kings 17:1, "Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab (King Ahab, Jezebel's husband), 'As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years according to my word.'" What faith he had. How much time had he spent alone with God making sure that he had heard what God wanted done, and making sure he knew what to say, making sure he was strong and full of faith. You have to arm yourself in your time where no one sees you and you are alone with God. God strengthens you and tells you what to say and what to do.

Elijah was not afraid to ask someone to make a sacrifice. I think that would be hard. Ask someone who is really struggling to do something sacrificial. It would be difficult unless you understood that anytime you make a sacrifice to God, whether it is financial or material, God will take care of you. He pays wonderful interest on any money given to Him. He takes care of you in miraculous ways. It sounded like a man going to a widow woman with a son and saying, "Give me everything you have, give me your last." Really, Elijah was a man of faith. He knew he was prompted by God to say that.

There have been a few times in my life that I have given financially to the Lord that it was sacrificial for me, and I cried every time. If I told you what they were, you would probably say it was not really a big deal. It was a big deal to me. It was very hard and I had to think it out and decide that I really believed it was what I was supposed to do. The other side of that story is what God did back for me was maybe a hundred times over what I had done for Him. I appreciate that God did that for me. If a man like Elijah came to me and asked me to do it, I think I would listen to him because I have listened to preachers that have talked to me about doing it. They were good men and they were right. They had heard God. Elijah had heard God. Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go and do as you have said (which was 'with what I have left I am going to make this cake, I am going to build this little first, we are going to eat it and then we are going to die.')

Elijah told her "Go ahead and do as you have said, but make me a little cake first and bring it to me, and afterwards make for you and your son." God has to come first in your life.

What else is there about Elijah that makes it seem that he is not like us? He had great authority and people would obey him. That comes with a knowledge of God. As you grow in your relationship with God, as you allow Him to control your life more and more, there is a strength that comes into you that people recognize. There is an authority that comes into you that people recognize. It can happen to you. In I Kings 17:15, the Bible says, "She went and did according to the sayings of Elijah, and she and he and her house did eat many days." There was the miracle. What else did Elijah have that we would say "No way that I could do that." Elijah had the faith to raise the dead. There are people all over the world today that are raising people from the dead. You might say, "No, that couldn't happen." Jesus said, "Go out and do it." God listened to him when he prayed. In I Kings 17:22, it says, "And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah." What does your voice sound like to God? You want it to be where it perks up His ears. "The Lord heard the voice of Elijah and the soul of the child came to him again (this was a little boy who was dead) and he revived." I know people that have raised people from the dead. They are just normal people, but they love God, and it has really happened. Once I was talking to a man whose parents were in the

missionary field in Brazil. He said "I don't believe that." I told him, "I know someone who did it. Would you like me to call her and have her come over and talk to you because it did happen?"

What else did Elijah have? Remember he was a man just like us so you have these things, too. He had the faith and the strong conviction of God to confront people in their unbelief. That takes a very strong man. People do not like to be confronted about unbelief. They will get mad at you and try to cut you down. I Kings 18:23 says "And Elijah came to all the people (think what kind of courage that took) and said 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. But, if Baal be god then follow him.' And the people answered him not a word." They were God's people so why did they not answer? They did not answer because they had been pressured and in fear of their lives and their jobs. If they did not serve the king, they could be killed. The king served other gods. He tried to get them to serve other gods. Elijah stood up to everyone.

There are times when you have to stand up. I am sure some of you have had to do that. In that situation, what do you have to think? You have to think, "If I lose my job, if I lose everything, this is the right thing to do and I am going to do it." There are people called whistleblowers. There was a whistleblower for the Enron scandal. There was another person who acted like a whistleblower and she was exposed because she actually was not. The true woman that was a whistleblower went into her bosses and said "What is being done is wrong. I cannot be a part of it." You have to have the kind of personal integrity that might cost you everything. You might lose your job and lose everything to take a stand, but you have to do it. The beautiful thing is God watches you. He listens to you. He watches what you are doing. After you have done it say, "Lord, I had to do that but I know you will take care of me." Then watch what God does to take care of you.

(There is someone watching right now who is in that situation. You have been going back and forth, "How long halt you between two opinions? If God be God, serve Him." You have been so scared to do this. I want you to remember Elijah, remember your personal integrity. That is more important than anything. I want you to ask God, "How do I do it, because I am going to do it.")

I Kings 18:36 says, "He spoke his faith out loud." Are you one of those Christians who does that? There are people who try to act religious and we know it does not feel right, it feels phoney. It is very legalistic. Something is not right about it. There are others that, when I hear them speak their faith out loud, they inspire. They make me say that I want to be like that. That is how Elijah was. Look in I Kings 18, it says, "And it came to pass at the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and he said 'Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, Israel, let it be known this day that Thou are God in Israel, and I am thy servant and I have done all of these things at Thy word.'" He made sure God was telling him to do it or to say it.

If we are going to talk about all the great things he did, we should also talk about all the things he struggled with. You might think, "Everyone does it right and I am the only one that has these issues." My pastor does not read Christian biographies or autobiographies. He says for the most part they sound like saints and you never find out the stuff that they struggled with. So let's look at what Elijah struggled with. The first thing he struggled with was fear. I have just told you about how bold he was in front of a king that could have killed him and in front of people that could have stomped him. He still battled fear. He had to struggle with it just like everyone else. Who was he afraid of? He was more afraid of the wife of the king than he was the king. I Kings 19:1-3 says "When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal. So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah 'May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you have killed them.' Elijah was afraid and fled for his life."

What happened? He had just stood up against the prophets of Baal. He saw fire come down from heaven and burn up wet wood. What could have happened? He did not stay protected and did not stay close to God. After you have done great things for God, be sure you get along with God right after that and draw really close into Him. He is the one that did it through you and it took a lot of energy out of you no matter what. Get alone with God and let Him strengthen you and build you back up. Elijah was probably depleted emotionally. When do you get afraid? Do you ever notice that fear can hit you at night? You wake up the next morning and think what was I worried about? You were exhausted. You had had a long hard day and all the thoughts hit you, "What is going to happen to me? What is going to happen to my family?" Then you get fear.

Another thing that Elijah had a serious problem with is depression. Depression is a hard thing to fight. A long time ago, about 30 years ago, I did not understand people with depression because I am happy most of the time. My family has had a lot of depression in it, but I did not understand it. One time I got very depressed. I am going to describe it and those of you that battle depression will know what I am talking about. I felt like I was in the bottom of a well. I would try to climb out, and just about the time I would get to the top, then I would slide back down again. I could not get out of it. I said, "God, what is wrong with

me? I have never had this happen before.” God said, “I wanted you to know what people feel like. When you are trying to help them, telling them to ‘Snap out of it’ it doesn’t do a bit of good.” Elijah battled depression. Look at I Kings 19. “I have had enough Lord. Take my life for I know better than my ancestors who have already died.” He was depressed, having a pity party. All of this was after he had done this great thing.

What else happened to Elijah, who was a man just like us? He was rebuked by God. God does not have favorites. You may be the greatest, hottest thing that ever came on television to serve Jesus. If you do not play by God’s rules, He does not have favorites and He will correct and rebuke you. You might say “That is the devil. The devil just really got after me.” No, it was God. He was tired of your behavior and said “You need to shape up. You need to quit this.” Elijah was rebuked by God. Let’s look at I Kings 19:9. “He went into a cave and spent the night and a message came to Elijah from the Lord. ‘Elijah what are you doing here?’ ‘Lord God who rules over all, I have been very committed to you. The people of Israel have turned their backs with Your covenant. They have torn down your alter. They are trying to kill me.’” Then God reveals Himself to Elijah and says, “I am this kind of Lord. I do not have to work in a whirlwind, I do not have to work in an earthquake. I am a still small voice.” Now do you see how normal Elijah was? He was a man just like us. That Scripture was written more than 2,000 years ago. People have not changed. No one is Jesus. There is only one Jesus and we are not Him. Yet He has said, “Let me live my life through you. Let me use you. Let me show people my power and my glory. Let me show people what I can do for them through you.”

God wants to do miracles through you. He says “Greater things than I have done are you going to do.” We live in the last days. You should realize “I can be me and still do great things for God.”

To watch the video on ELIJAH WAS A MAN JUST LIKE US, Pillar Seven, People of the Bible Speak to People of the 21st Century, go to www.bettyswann.com.

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