

Elijah was a mighty man of God – in some respects the greatest of all the prophets since Moses until the appearance of John the Baptist (**Matthew 11:11**). Although he lived 3000 years ago and his period of ministry was comparatively short, he is by no means a forgotten character (see **Malachi 4:5; Matthew 11:14; 27:47; Luke 1:17; John 1:21**). As we study his life and ministry the Holy Spirit will teach us valuable lessons which will enable us to live for and serve the Lord more effectively.

**James 5:17a: “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours....”**

- Grammatical Usage: “**nature**” or in the Greek, “*homoioopathés*” meaning, “same affections, passions, feelings, infirmities.”
- Literal Interpretation: Elijah was a human being as we are, the same affections, passions, feelings and infirmities.
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word, God continually uses His Word. Elijah’s sudden appearance upon the page of scripture centers upon the tremendous announcement he made to Ahab (**1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17-18**). However, before we look more closely at this remarkable man, let us suggest several classes of people to whom this series of studies will make a special appeal:
  - First, those who feel their sphere of service is hard. If this is you, the story of Elijah should bring great encouragement.
  - Second, those who feel they are lone workers. How easily such are tempted to say, as Elijah said, “I am the only one left!” There is encouragement here for them.
  - Third, those whose patience is sorely tried and who see few results. Elijah knew all about this! The story of his patience, endurance and ultimate achievement will encourage us to press on.
  - Fourth, those who feel there is little they can do to influence an apostate age. There was little that Elijah could do, but how much it was – **James 5:17-18**! We, likewise, have been given this weapon of believing prayer.
  - Fifth, those who have failed (and who has not?). The story of Elijah contains one sad incident (**1 Kings 19**), but what help we find in it!

**1. ELIJAH WAS A MAN JUST LIKE OURSELVES**

We tend to regard men like Elijah, Moses, Daniel and the other O.T. ‘worthies’ as men who walked on heights inaccessible to us. But who was Elijah? **James 5:17** tells us: a man with a nature just like yours and mine. A man, not an angel; a man who at one point failed badly. A great man, yes, but essentially no different from ourselves.

**2. WE ARE TOLD NOTHING ABOUT ELIJAH’S EARLY LIFE AND UPBRINGING**

He is described as Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, and as his name means, “God is my strength”, this may indicate that he had godly parents. We can be sure, however, that God had been preparing him all through his early years. And remember,

every experience through which the Lord leads us is a preparation for the further work He has in store for us. Waiting time is never wasted time.

### 3. ELIJAH LIVED IN A DAY OF SPIRITUAL DECLENSION AND APOSTASY

A succession of seven wicked kings had reigned over Israel: (1) Jeroboam (**1 Kings 12:28-33**); (2) Nadab (**15:25-26**); (3) Baasha (**15:27-28**); (4) Elah, a drunkard and a murderer (**16:8-9**); (5) Zimri, guilty of treason (**16:20**); (6) Omri (**16:25-26**); and (7) Ahab (**16:28-33**), with whom must be linked his notoriously wicked wife Jezebel. Worship of the true God had all but ceased; Baal-worship had become the national religion. Only 7000 Israelites remained true in heart to the Lord, and these were fearful and had hidden their testimony (**1 Kings 19:18**). A floodtide of idolatry, superstition and evil had overwhelmed the nation; never had God's favored nation sunk so low spiritually and morally.

### 4. ELIJAH WAS COMMISSIONED BY GOD TO PERFORM SOME VERY DIFFICULT TASKS

These included: (1) announcing the drought to Ahab (**17:1**); (2) challenging Ahab and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (**18:1-41**); (3) declaring God's righteous judgment upon Ahab and Jezebel in the matter of Naboth's vineyard (**21:1-29**). How we need people of Elijah's courage today!

### 5. ELIJAH'S LIFE WAS MARKED BY COMPLETE SEPARATION FROM THE EVIL AROUND HIM

A good motto over his life would be **Ephesians 5:11** (and with it **2 Corinthians 6:14-16**). How could Elijah have any fellowship with the apostate leaders of Israel? His separation from the evil around him was uncompromising (**Hebrews 13:13**).

### 6. ELIJAH'S MINISTRY WAS CHARACTERISED BY THE SUPERNATURAL

Consider God's mighty acts in and through him: (1) fed by ravens at the brook (**17:1-6**); (2) the widow's meal and oil replenished (**17:8-16**); (3) her son raised (**17:17-23**); (4) fire from heaven (**18:36-38**); (5) fed by an angel (**19:5-7**); (6) more fire from heaven (**2 Kings 1:9-12**); (7) dividing the waters of Jordan (**2 Kings 2:8**); (8) raptured into the presence of God by a whirlwind (**2:11**).

### 7. ELIJAH LIVED CONSCIOUSLY IN GOD'S PRESENCE AND RELIED UPON HIS STRENGTH

**1 Kings 17:1**: his God was the living God; the covenant God (the Lord God of Israel); the God "**whom I serve**" (as His servant – compare **1 Kings 10:8** and **Luke 1:19**) and compare to **Isaiah 40:28-31** and **2 Timothy 4:17**.

What was Elijah's secret? Was it not that by communion and prayer he really did know the Lord? And the Lord not only faithfully sustained him, but was able to work via his faithfulness as a mighty testimony to a lost and perverse culture.

- Conclusion: Am I willing to live faithfully, giving my unknown circumstances to the All Knowing, praying for God's will to be done to and through me?