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### One Man's Prayer for a Nation

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## ONE MAN'S PRAYER FOR A NATION

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES  
NUMBER 45  
JAMES 5:17-18

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JAMES 5:17-18 "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

We have been studying passages on the power of prayer. Here in verses 17 and 18 we see a man who offered prayer for a sick nation. The nation, which is the Northern Kingdom of Israel, is about to be destroyed by reversionism. The fifth cycle of discipline was about to fall on Israel when this event took place.

JAMES 5:17 "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." The Greek word "heleias" is taken from the Hebrew word "elijahu" and in English it is "Elijah." It really means "Jehovah delivers." Artists have really butchered this man up, for they all show him with long hair and long beard which he didn't have. The ones who had the long hair and beard were those who took the vow of a Nazarite. They drank no wine and didn't cut their hair. "Was a man" and the words are "eimi anthropos" and this in the context means he was a spiritual giant. The words "ish Elohim" are used of Elijah, meaning he was a devout man of God. He was a man filled with Bible doctrine. Alone he stood in the gap and by his prayer he saved a nation from destruction.

### The Power Of One Man's Prayer

We have just studied this principle--"The prayer of a righteous man has much power when it is operational." Elijah is going to use every facet of his super grace life and the prayers of this one man will delay the destruction of the nation.

The phrase "subject to like passions" is a compound adverb "homoi pathes" and means similar feelings, similar circumstances, similar pressures. He was a patriot and he loved his nation deeply. But he loved his Lord even more. This is why he stepped into the gap to deliver the wicked nation. He was even ready to give his life to save the nation if this became necessary. It says here "a man subject to like passions as we are" but that is incorrect. It really says "to us" and this is referring to believers of the Church Age like we are. This man had the same passion and patriotism for his nation as true believers have today.

"And he prayed," the aorist, middle, indicative of "proseuchomai" and it means to offer prayer. It is an ingressive aorist and it means in a point of time he offered one prayer and it held back the rain for 3½ years. The nation will have no rain for 3½ years and as a result, a nation is going to repent. The middle voice means that Elijah was himself completely involved in this action. There is no word here for "earnestly" but the word is "proseuchi," so it actually says, "By means of prayer he began to pray." This is one of those operational prayers that has much power. Next we have an aorist, active, infinitive of "brecho" plus "me" translated "That it might not rain" and in this way God would warn the whole nation of their reversionism. Now this is a constantive aorist and it means the power of that prayer would be operational for the whole 3½ year period. In verse 18 we will have a culminative aorist which means he will pray again and the rain will come.

The next words are "epi" meaning "on" and the word "ge" meaning "the land." Next we have an accusative of the extent of time and it is translated "by the space of 3½ years."

So look now at a correct translation of this verse--"Elijah was a human being similar to us in feelings, circumstances, pressures. And by means of prayer, he began to pray not to send rain and it did not rain on the land for 3½ years."

#### Summary

1. For 3½ years God knocked on the door of the Northern Kingdom.
2. The knocking on the door was God's warning to a nation in reversionism.
3. The warning concerned the coming national disaster was the application of the 5th Cycle of Discipline to the Jews.
4. While believers and unbelievers in apostasy were wasting time in a time of disaster, Elijah, the super grace believer, offered the only prayer he could pray and then walked out. This is the illustration of that last sentence in verse 16--"The prayer of a super grace believer like Elijah has much power when it becomes operational."

#### A Powerful Prayer

Elijah offered one prayer and as a result, it didn't rain for 3½ years. It doesn't show what a great man in prayer he was, but rather it shows how powerful God is in answering prayer. Part one of his prayer is in verse 17, and then 3½ years later he will pray the second part of his prayer, and this is explained in verse 18. This prayer was based on doctrine. Deuteronomy 28:23-24 explained the doctrine.

DEUTERONOMY 28:23-24 "And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed."

#### Who Was Elijah?

Elijah was a member of the Northern Kingdom who lived across the river. He lived in the land of Gilead where one half of the tribe of Reuben was located. Reuben was the tribe that was supposed to have the rulership, the priesthood, and the double portion, but he lost all three because of his instability. Elijah was one of those Reubenites who, according to the Jews, lived as we say "on the wrong side of the tracks." When he did come into the land, in the words of King Ahab, he came as "a troublemaker." But trouble was already in the land, for the trouble was reversionism. The Northern Kingdom, because of apostasy and sin, was about to be destroyed. God had to bring one man across the river to shake them up and sober them. He became God's instrument to arouse a sick and sinful nation. Elijah was a man of super grace with maximum doctrine in his soul. He was called the Tishbite because he came from a town called "Tishbi" in Gilead. He crossed the river because God had commanded him to do so. "Elijah" means "Jehovah is my God."

The Bible doesn't give us any background on Elijah, his family, his training, or his former work. But remember this--no super grace believer has to depend on his ancestors or his background or his training. A super grace believer depends only on his relationship with the Lord. He never complained about his education or his lack of education. He never referred to his native ability or his lack of native ability. But he took in doctrine every day and became a super grace prophet.

Remember this principle--A super grace believer is never the product of his environment. He is never the product of past handicaps or failures. He is the total production of grace. He is a grace man all the way and this is the reason we have no other facts about his background. Bible doctrine brought to him fantastic ability and capacity.

Turn to 1 Kings 17.

1 KINGS 17:1 "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." "As the Lord God of Israel liveth" means that he is occupied with Jesus Christ. "The Lord God Of Israel" is none other than Jesus Christ. The word "liveth" is a kal imperfect of "chay." Now Elijah said many things to Ahab in addition to the things listed here. We know that from the kal imperfect of "amar." "Before whom I stand" is a kal perfect of "Amadh" and it means I stand there in the past and keep standing there now. Please notice the dogmatic statement of Elijah.

"There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." In other words, Elijah said to brother Ahab, "Buster, this is it!" And he was gone before Ahab had time to answer.

#### Depression In The Land

No rain meant depression in the land. This meant a complete breakdown in this agricultural economy. Now Ahab was the most wicked king the Northern Kingdom ever had.

1 KINGS 16:30 "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him."

He had married an unbeliever named Jezebel.

1 KINGS 16:31-33 "And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

#### A Curse On Jericho

The next verse in 1 Kings 16 is very significant, for when Joshua destroyed Jericho he placed a curse on anyone who would ever rebuild this city. JOSHUA 6:26 "And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it."

Now look at this verse with that in mind.

1 KING 16:34 "In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun."

So we are now reading the fulfillment of that curse. There would be no rain on the land, and this was a fulfillment of scripture.

DEUTERONOMY 11:16-17 "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you."

LEVITICUS 26:19 "And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:"

So the message from Elijah is this--There is going to be an agricultural depression on this land for 3½ years.

1 KINGS 17:2 "And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying," God is always specific when he speaks to his man. Then he spoke directly or in visions or dreams or revelation. Now he speaks through his word.

1 KINGS 17:3-4 "Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." On three occasions God is going to say to Elijah "move." He instructs Elijah to go back across the river and hide by the brook "Cherith" and in Hebrew it is "kerith" and it comes from the verb "karath" and it means "to be cut off." His prayers will "cut off" the dew and the rain for 3½ years. Therefore, God will hide him by a brook that means "cut off." He is told to go there and to cool it! The buzzards are ordered to feed him. (Your Bible says ravens but it means buzzards.) God had set it all up for Elijah. "I have commanded" is a piel perfect of "tsawah" and it means perfect preparation. God always prepares the way for a super grace believer. "Buzzards" were the garbage men of the desert and God used them to care for Elijah. They became his servants and while the land was in a terrible drought, Elijah was going to live first class. The buzzards brought fresh meat to Elijah and those waiters would not give away his hiding place. Many scouting parties were sent out by Ahab to find him, but they would see those buzzards circling around over there and no one would suspect that they had anything to do with Elijah. Anything connected with them would be dead anyhow, so they never gave away his hiding place.

1 KING 17:5 "So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan." "He went" is from "jalak" and it means to walk. "Did accordingly" is from "asah" and in the kal imperfect it means to manufacture something out of something. In other words, Elijah manufactured his obedience out of the doctrine he knew. The word "dwelt" is a kal imperfect of "jashab" and it means to dwell in a place of happiness and blessing. (And he didn't even take his radio or television with him.)

1 Kings 17:6-7 "And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land."

Every day the brook got lower and lower and one day Elijah came to drink of it and it was dry. His prayers were working. The Jordan was drying up and the brook fed by the Jordan was drying up. Now we all, sooner or later, come to our dried up brooks. The word is a kal perfect of "jabesh" and it means "completely dry." Now get the point-- HE IS OUT OF WATER BUT HE IS NOT OUT OF DOCTRINE. He doesn't panic, for just because the water went down, it didn't mean his doctrine declined. He still had the important thing.

#### God's Entertainment

God is going to provide entertainment for Elijah for 3½ years so he can end up the prayer in the right way and in the right time. Now how do you entertain a super grace prophet? God did it in a first class way and he was God's perfect guest for 3½ years. You recall the Exodus generation fell apart when they came to a no water situation but here is a super grace believer and the dried up brook doesn't trouble him in the least.

#### What Will You Do At The Dried-Up Brook?

Are you going to fall apart and ring your hands and cry, or are you going to do as Elijah did? I can tell you. If you are loaded with doctrine, then no dried-up brook that ever comes will hurt you in the least.

1 KINGS 17:8 "And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying," The brook has dried up and Elijah simply says, "Lord, what next?" And The Lord was ready with the answer.

1 KINGS 17:9 "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." Now "Zarephath" was in the land of Ahab and Jezebel. This is the land of reversionism. This is the land where the scouts were out looking everywhere for Elijah. The words translated "widow woman" in your text come from "ishah almanah" and they mean a forsaken woman, an unmarried woman with a son. She was an outcast woman. God is going to use this "ishah almanah" to feed Elijah. Elijah is commanded "to dwell" there and it is the same words used when he was "to dwell" by the brook. He was to dwell there in happiness and peace. Back in verse 4 we read, "I have commanded" and now here we read "I have commanded" this woman to feed you. It is the same kal perfect of the word "tsawah." "To sustain thee" is a piel infinitive construct of "kiel." He is going to give her doctrine, and she is going to feed him, serve him, wait on him, and care for him. God had graced out Elijah and he is going to grace out this woman.

1 KINGS 17:10 "So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." You can imagine this amazing incident. Here is a forsaken woman, ready to starve and to die after eating her last meal, and Elijah asks her to bring him a drink.

1 KINGS 17:11 "And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." But not only does he want a drink, he is asking her to take that last bit of food she has and give him a meal. She had given up and was facing death and now Elijah asks her for her last meal.

1 KINGS 17:12 "And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." She used the words "As the Lord thy God liveth" and that's exactly the same words Elijah had used with Ahab. God had dried up the brook and at the same time God let her oil and meal dry up so at the exact moment he could bring Elijah to her so they could have a party. I call this "THE DRIED UP PARTY."

God is going to entertain them gloriously at "THE DRIED UP PARTY" and to see how it comes out, you will have to come back next Wednesday night.