



BETHEL CHURCH
INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE



A STUDY ON THE LIFE OF

ELIJAH



INTRODUCTION

Elijah emerges on the biblical scene with a very hasty introduction that tells us little about his background:

*“Now **Elijah the Tishbite**, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.’” (1 Kings 17:1)*

Understanding Elijah requires an examination of his historical context. After the Jewish people fled slavery in Egypt and settled in the Promised Land, they established a kingdom ruled by Jewish kings. The first three kings of the Jewish kingdom were Saul, then David, followed by Solomon. After Solomon, the kingdom split into two parts: the North (“Israel”) and the South (“Judah”).

The northern half of the “Divided Kingdom” immediately veered towards idol worship. As if this wasn’t bad enough, the seventh king of the North, King Ahab, took idolatry to new levels. His wife Jezebel, the daughter of a Phoenician king, imported Baal worship and aggressively led the nation to reject their covenant relationship with Yahweh and follow the god Baal. It was in this context that God sent the prophet Elijah to call the people back to Him.

Elijah's name is a combination of two names for God, Elohim and Yahweh (or Jehovah). It reads “Yah is *El*” and could be translated “*Yahweh is God.*”

The Bible describes the clothing style of only 2 prophets – Elijah and John the Baptist. Elijah donned a “...*hairy animal skin cinched around the waist with a leather belt.*” (2 Kings 1:8)



THE BOOKS OF 1 AND 2 KINGS

Elijah's biography begins in 1 Kings Chapter 17 and concludes in 2 Kings Chapter 2.

The books of 1 and 2 Kings were written by an “*unknown prophet*” that covers about four centuries of history from the conclusion of David's reign to the release of Jehoiachin from Babylonian exile during the reign of Evil-Merodach (2 Kings 25:28). The author of 1 and 2 Kings is much of a theologian than a historian and writes from the perspective of how Israel persisted in their rebellion against God and His word, which led them to exile.

Although Israel had many kings, they were not the ultimate authority in Israel. Rather, God's covenant word was the real authority. This is why God raised up a prophetic office to counterbalance the office of kingship. *For every king, there was a prophet or group of prophets to keep the king in check and remind him about the covenant with God and his accountability as king.*

Thus, 1 and 2 Kings might more accurately be titled “*Kings vs Prophets*.” The author pits each new king against a prophet(s) to enable us to see that God's prophetic word ultimately determines Israel's history. It is actually the prophets and the word spoken through them that drives the books.

BIG LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF ELIJAH

The greatest lesson that we can learn from Elijah is his ***Courageous Faith***. Elijah was a man anointed by God to proclaim God's word during a time in Israel's history when they were far from God, and the kings and rulers were not interested in Yahweh. He faced some of the most powerful and influential people of his time and did not waver in his conviction of God's will. He was often faced with tests from the prophets of Baal and although he faced severe opposition, he remained steadfast in his faith.

Elijah is an important figure in the Bible and the miracles performed through him serve as powerful reminders of God's power used to restore and rebuild the faith of His people. He was a true man of God, determined to draw the people back to a faithful relationship with the Lord. His extraordinary end was a testament to the power and might of God and the rewards that await those who follow Him.

Elijah's obedience to the voice of God is one of the best takeaways from his life. As we obey the Lord, the next step of His plan for our lives is revealed. That is what the Lord did with Elijah. After proclaiming the word to Ahab, he was told to move near River Cherith where ravens fed him regularly. Later, he was fed at the widow's house. He was dependent on God for his provisions and never once questioned the quality or method.

‘If God gives, He will satisfy us’ was his motto, which enabled him to live a life that was fully dependent on God.

James 5:17 shows us that “*Elijah was a man of like passions as we are*” and although he did accomplish great things for God he also suffered through a period of self-doubt, fear, and suicidal thoughts. But even in his moments of hopelessness, he was willing to trust God and obey with a renewed heart. **He was truly a man of prayer** – a man who had a conversational relationship with God.

THE FAMINE, THE RAVENS AND THE WIDOW OF ZARAPATH

1 Kings 17:1:- “*And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.”*”

Elijah is recognized as the most important leader of Yahweh’s worship after Moses and Samuel. Although he is one of the best-known prophets in the Old Testament, we know very little about his early life. Dramatically, without any introduction, Elijah leaps onto the scene. Apparently, the royal couple had never met him. Without preface or introduction, he appeared before Ahab and Jezebel in Samaria and with startling bravado announced the drought. No personal credentials. No reasons for the drought. No conditions for mercy. He delivered his message and suddenly disappeared.

Who is King Ahab?

Ahab was the seventh king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

1 Kings 16:30 states, “Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him.” Ahab on the one side is unwilling to give up



his worship of Yahweh, but on the other, he adopted idol worship as a superstitious attempt to buy good luck and success, while pleasing his wives and neighbouring nations. Ahab was guilty of:

- 1) Marrying Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians
- 2) Worshiping Baal and bowing down to him
- 3) Building a temple for Baal-Melkart in Samaria
- 4) Erecting in the same temple an image of the goddess Asherah, “the earth - mother”
- 5) Rebuild the walls of Jericho, which God commanded not to do

Prophet Elijah warned Ahab that the country would suffer from drought if the cult of Baal was not removed from the land of Israel (*Baal is considered to be the god of fertility and harvest*).

During the famine, the angry king Ahab pursued Elijah to bring back the rain. Ahab was angry and frustrated over his futile attempts to locate the prophet (18:10). God sent Elijah to a safe hiding place beside a stream flowing into the east bank of the Jordan, where there would be ample drinking water and food - bread and meat – miraculously delivered to him twice a day by ravens as instructed by God.



In time, the drought worsened. The Brook Cherith dried up, and God sent Elijah about a hundred miles north to the home of a widow in the Phoenician coastal city of Zarephath, approximately seven miles south of Sidon.

Here Elijah witnessed the God of miracles at work again. A poverty-stricken widow suffering the deprivation of the drought with a son she was struggling to feed. And Elijah

was supposed to ask her for—of all things— water and something to eat. The hopelessness served to intensify the approaching miracle. Even though she lived in a Gentile city, the widow was probably a believer in Yahweh. 1 Kings 17:12 indicates that she knew the name of the Lord and that she recognized Elijah as an Israelite—even as a man of God. Jesus’ reference to her in Luke 4:26 implies she was a believer. The miracle of the unending supply of oil and flour was the reward she received for feeding the prophet. However, the miracle was initiated by Elijah who obeyed the voice of God irrespective of external circumstances.

It seems **the brook prepared**

Elijah for what was to come. The God who commanded the ravens and supplied through them was the same God who had commanded the widow and would supply through her. Elijah responded in faith. But *how did faith manifest itself?* Like Abraham on Mount Moriah who looked to God for the supply of a lamb, so Elijah saw beyond the woman’s condition to Yahweh Jireh—the Lord who provides.

RAVENS: Ravens are large black birds closely related to crows, the main difference being that ravens are bigger, with a wingspan that reaches 50 inches. Ravens are primarily scavengers. Biologists consider them to be extremely intelligent birds.

Ravens appear in the Bible in only a few places.

- In law of Moses, it is considered an unclean bird (**Leviticus 11:13-19**). Thus, not to be eaten under any circumstances
- Noah sent out a raven in search of dry land (**Genesis 8:6-7**)
- Despite their negative image, God cares for the ravens and he feeds them (**Psalms 147:9**)
- When Jesus wanted to impress the truth of “do not be anxious”, he told them to “consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them” (**Luke 12:24**).

He did not judge according to sight, but according to God's character and divine essence. We are called *"to live by faith and not by sight"* (2 Cor.5:7). The Lord uses His sources of supply to humble us. Here, Elijah was receiving aid at the hands of a destitute widow who belonged to the enemies of Israel. How humbling! Nevertheless, it was an opportunity for the manifestation of God's grace, love, and power.

No one had ever been raised from the dead before--at least, not one that was recorded in the Scripture. What Elijah did was a first by raising the dead son of the widow and providing the living son back to her. There was a display of tremendous faith, but he knew nothing was impossible with the Lord... absolutely nothing! Believing that God wanted him to resurrect the child, he acted on his faith and asked God for the life of the widow's son.

THE SHOWDOWN ON MOUNT CARMEL

1 Kings 18:38-39:- *"Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!"*

The conversation between the king and the prophet beginning in verse 17 of 1 Kings 18 confirmed that Ahab still blamed the drought on Elijah's arbitrary stubbornness, and not on his own idolatry. 9

Like Nathan's famous "*Thou art the man*" dialogue that was dished out to David, Elijah took it upon himself to set the record straight. He pointed out that Israel was troubled because Ahab had replicated his father Omri's disobedience and added his own idolatry to the already ongoing sin of the land. A great national contest was to settle the debate about the True God once and for all.

It was designed to teach the people and King Ahab that the three-and-a-half years of drought followed by the abundance of rain was the work of Yahweh - the only true God. The drought was discipline for disobedience to God's Word and the rain was the provision of His grace. In the unfolding of this drama, several scenes occur that are important because of the lessons we can learn by comparing those who walk with God in faith, trusting Him rather than their own plans, and those who do not.

It was decision time at Mount Carmel! Yahweh and Baal could not be placed on the same plane. One was greater than the other. Of course, we know who was, is and forever will be greatest, but the people of Israel awaited proof. Elijah said, "*If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him*" (v. 21). The phrase, "***How long will you falter between two opinions?***" is difficult to translate clearly but it closely means to leap or limp around God and Baal. *How long will you try to worship both Yahweh and Baal at the same time?*" The statement is clearly a metaphor to condemn half-hearted, double-minded indecision. The key issues of

our day and any day are the instability of indecision and doublemindedness. What a dangerous situation to be in!

The test was obviously designed to manifest and prove the true God. Was it Yahweh, the Lord of Israel, or Baal? In order to avoid any accusations of unfairness, Elijah set the conditions of the contest to give every possible concession to the prophets of Baal:

- 1) They could be the first to choose the sacrifice.
- 2) They could pray first and for as long as they wished.
- 3) The sign of proof was in the fire.

Since Baal was supposed to be the god of the sun, and the god of the storm, they could not object. So they set up their altar and called on their god to answer.

Elijah was composed and self-assured in contrast to the wild acrobatics of the Baal worshipers. There must have been a previous altar to Yahweh nearby which had been torn down, maybe by Jezebel's followers. From the old altar, Elijah took twelve stones from which to symbolically form the base of a new altar. The trench was dug and twelve jars of water were poured over it all.



Elijah repaired the altar and prepared the sacrifice. He did it according to the principles of the Word. But he put no fire under the sacrifice. After his simple and dignified prayer, the mighty fire of God fell and consumed the sacrifice, altar, stones, water, and everything. The people, now convinced, cried out, “*The LORD, He is God!*” “*Yahweh is Elohim!*” Those words in Hebrew were actually Elijah’s name - “*Yah is El!*”



There was no neutrality or diplomacy in the context of Mount Carmel. It was much like when Jesus said one must choose the side they are on:

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” — Matthew 6:24

“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.” - Matthew 12:30

What can we learn from Elijah's actions and prayer?

Elijah teaches us that we must come to God on His terms and through His means of access. There is no access to God apart from God's prescribed sacrifices. But remember that the **Old Testament sacrifice was a shadow of Christ and God's sacrifice for the sin of the world through His Son** (Heb. 10:5-10; John 1:29). Today we have access to God through faith in the person and work of Christ who died in our place to bear our sin so that we can call God our **Abba Father**.

The basis for Elijah's actions was, of course, the promise God made to him in 18:1. But what was the need for prayer? God had said, "*Rain is coming.*" Elijah's confidence in prayer was based on the revelation of the character and nature of God as Yahweh. Prayer is a very important dimension in the life of every believer. Prayer is a God-given tool to reveal our dependence on the Lord and keeps us reliant on Him. **James 5:17 reminds us that Elijah was a man of like passions, but his game-changer was his prayer life.** The fervent prayers of the righteous move the Holy Spirit of God to accomplish His work through the land.

Ahab went back to his palace to eat and drink, when he heard from Elijah that the rain was impending. This shows his insensitivity to the graciousness of God. But on the other hand, Elijah went up to the top of the mountain to pray

(1 Kings 18:42). Our prayer life and our hunger for the Word are clear barometers of the condition of our hearts. When we continue to ignore God's revelation and pursue our own desires and plans, it has a hardening effect on the heart.

ELIJAH AND QUEEN JEZEBEL – THE VULNERABILITY OF VICTORY!

1 Kings 19:1:- *And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. ²Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” ³And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life...”*

The humanness of the heroes of the Bible can be tremendously instructive and encouraging to the heart. There is probably no passage that we can relate to more than 1 Kings 19. Some look at the Elijah of chapters 17 and 18, the man of faith, and

“Jezebel” is a name synonymous with evil; she is the epitome of a wicked woman. Around 400 prophets of Baal and 450 prophets of Asherah ate at the table of Jezebel (1 Kings 18:19).

One of her first acts was to order the extermination of the prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 18:4, 13) and set up altars to Baal. She lived a life of immorality, idolatry, false teachings, and unrepented sins. She was not guided by principles or restrained by a fear of God or man. She was passionate in her pursuit and heavily attached to heathenistic worship.

So pervasive was her idolatrous influence in Israel that the Lord Jesus later used her name to refer to a woman who led the church at Thyatira into immorality and the worship of false gods (Revelation 2:20).

then look at the Elijah of chapter 19, the man of fear with a critical spirit.

Of course, being afraid is no sign of weakness; it is the response to fear that reveals character. Even courageous heroes are often afraid. So perhaps we should not be surprised that even this super-prophet had moments of fear, disappointment, and self-pity.

King Ahab told his wife - the notorious Jezebel what Elijah

5 characteristics of the spirit of Jezebel today:

- *Operates in both men and woman and causes control, manipulation, and domination (a form of witchcraft).*
- *Seduces and provokes sexual immorality.*
- *Teaches false doctrine or slanted truths.*
- *Loves leadership positions and thrives where leadership is weak (for every Jezebel there is an Ahab).*
- *It causes continual fear and discouragement.*

had done. She reacted with vengeance and threatened to kill Elijah. Elijah ran for his life down to Beersheba, the desert in the southernmost part of Judah. Leaving his servant, he continued for another day into the desert, crawled under a broom tree and, in deep depression, asked God to let him die.

God gives us this portrait of Elijah to teach us how vulnerable we are, how important our focus and our attitudes are, and how much we constantly need the grace of God for every moment and every breath. God portrays people, especially the great heroes of the faith, as they really are--mere human beings, earthen vessels, clay pots.

We are instruments used by God to display His glory, but worthless in ourselves apart from Him (1 Cor. 3:5-7; 2 Cor. 4:7).

This contrast in Elijah's life is designed to teach us that our strongest victory can turn into the very place where we are the most vulnerable and susceptible to defeat. A believer's greatest strength is focus, dependence, and faith in the Lord, but this is also his greatest place of vulnerability. So *where does Satan want to attack us?* In the area of our need to depend on God. Unless this is remembered, defeat will always follow victory. Misery will follow blessing. This is why the Word warns us, "*Therefore, let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall*" (1 Cor. 10:12). This warning occurs close to the end of a passage that deals with the principle that privilege never guarantees victory or success (1 Cor. 10:1-11).

The main cause of Elijah's depression is the problem of expectation. He anticipated a real turnaround in the spiritual condition of people including Ahab and Jezebel's heart, but the opposite transpires. Interestingly, even our expectations can easily slip into demanding that things work out the way we think they should. When we focus on our expectations and make the results we want the source of our happiness, security, or significance, we end up in the Elijah syndrome--fearful, ready to run away, and engulfed in feelings of failure and depression or fear and frustration.

We should never walk by sight--as things appear to us. ***It is right to expect the Lord to work, but our expectations must never be the source of our happiness or our confidence in the work of God.*** We must learn to rest our expectations in God's sovereignty, trusting Him for the timing and the means. We are to walk by faith in the sovereign control and providence of the Lord (2 Cor. 5:7; Ps. 103:19; 115:3).

A DEPRESSED ELIJAH AND GOD'S GENTLE WHISPER

1 Kings 19:11-12:- “Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.”

It is difficult to believe that the man, who a few hours earlier had witnessed God's convincing fire at Carmel, who could vividly remember the miraculous downpour, the providential ravens, the widow's oil, and her risen son, could so quickly melt before Jezebel's threat and resort to a cowardly retreat.

Twice the bone-weary man of God fell asleep only to be awakened by an angel with food and water. After a time of rest and miraculous nourishment, Elijah was able to travel for forty days and nights into the Sinai desert as far as Mount Horeb (or Mount Sinai), over a hundred and fifty miles down south. He was in the same cave in which Moses hid when God appeared to him on the mountain. Here God addressed a question to the prophet, which He repeated in verse 13: *“What are you doing here, Elijah?”* Though it contains the sting of divine rebuke, it seems to have been God’s gracious way of inviting Elijah to speak and pour out his heart.



The whining tone of self-pity Elijah shows in verse 10 is out of character for someone who had just recently experienced such dramatic evidence of God's care. He felt like a martyr with a compelling need to piously remind God about his zeal, his commitment, and his lonely suffering.

While complaining about being the only faithful one left, he forgot about the great multitudes at Carmel who acknowledged that Yahweh was God. He forgot about the one hundred prophets protected by courageous Obadiah. (1 Kings 18:4)

Of the several theophanies in the Old Testament, the one described in this section is perhaps the most famous. God sent the wind, earthquake, and fire, but His presence was not found in these spectacular agents of disaster. Instead, it was in the “*still small voice*” that followed them. In the theophany, Elijah seems to be taught that he should not always expect God to make spectacular appearances in the form of wind, earthquake, and fire. *God also reveals Himself in clear, intelligible communication. This message may be an anticipation of the coming of Jesus Christ who would be God’s ultimate Word to His creation.*

Typical of his fiery temperament, Elijah wanted vengeance. He wanted God to send the windstorm, the earthquake, and the fire upon Jezebel and her idolaters, but God was reminding him that He is in control, not Elijah. The point of God speaking in the still small voice was to show Elijah that the work of God need not always be accompanied by dramatic revelation or manifestations. Divine silence does not necessarily mean divine inactivity.

ELIJAH'S NEW MANDATE TO ANOINT KINGS AND A PROPHET

1 Kings 19:15-16:- *“Then the LORD said to him: “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.”*

The first word from God to Elijah after the dramatic demonstration on Mount Horeb is “Go.” On Mount Horeb, God instructed Elijah to anoint three significant leaders of the next generation – Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha. But Elijah went directly to anoint Elisha and passed on his ministry mantle to him. Interestingly, it is through Elisha’s leadership that two kings were anointed – Hazael (to be king of Syria) and Jehu (to be the king of Israel). Remember, the overall objective was to remove false worship from Israel and turn the whole nation back to God. An essential part of achieving this was to remove the ungodly leaders.

The call of Elisha, a young man available and positive to the Word and the Lord, and the 7,000 who had not bowed to Baal illustrate that God’s Word does not return void no matter how things may look to us. The nation would not be totally exterminated and there were those who would carry on the work of the Lord.

Elijah's ministry does not end with the call of Elisha, who became Elijah's attendant and mentee. Instead, it continued for several years as he mentored Elisha. After his renewal by the Lord on Mount Horeb, Elijah began a ministry of discipling Elisha.

ELIJAH'S JUDGMENT OF AHAB YET AGAIN

1 Kings 21:17-19:- *“Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, “Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. You shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Have you murdered and also taken possession?” ’ And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.”*

Elijah re-enters the picture after a long interlude that began in Chapter 18 of 1 Kings when he was last mentioned. In this passage God sends him to Jezreel to confront the wicked King Ahab for the second time. *“There he is,” God said, “in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it”* (1 Kings 21:18). God wanted Elijah to catch Ahab red-handed, for murdering his neighbour Naboth and confiscating his property – a vineyard. As usual, Elijah had appeared with dramatic suddenness, to judge the king for the last time. Elijah's words were harsh: *“In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.”* (1 Kings 21:19)

Even though Ahab repented of his sins when Elijah confronted him and God did not send any calamity immediately, Ahab did more to provoke God to anger “*than all the kings of Israel who had come before him*” (1 Kings 16:33). So, Elijah’s prophecies about Ahab came true later. In time, all that God had spoken came to pass. Ahab died in battle of Ramoth-Gilead (1 Kings 22:20, 37).

Queen Jezebel died in the exact way Elijah had prophesied i.e. she was to be eaten by dogs from the walls of Jezreel (1 Kings 21:23, 2 Kings 9:33-37). The prophecy came true later when Jehu performed a coup and exterminated the house of Ahab (2 Kings 10:11-17), and had Jezebel thrown out of her window. In a vivid description sparing no details, Jezebel’s blood splattered on impact and Jehu finished the job

John the Baptist is symbolically represented as Elijah in the New Testament.

They both had similar clothing style – Elijah wore a hairy leather garment with a leather belt while John the Baptist wore camel’s hair robe and leather belt.

The Herod – Herodias story that led to beheading of John the Baptist fits well into the Ahab – Jezebel pattern of persecuting Elijah.

Since the scribes believed that Elijah would return to prepare the way for the Messiah, it is no surprise that the priests and Levites, seeing John’s hairy garments, asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” (John 1:21).

Jesus acknowledged that John did indeed fulfil symbolically the expectation that Elijah would precede the Messiah. He said of John:

“But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise, the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.” (Matthew 17:12)

with his chariot. Dogs were allowed to eat her body, which left little to bury. (2 Kings 9:30–36)



Interestingly, God was very patient with Ahab and Jezebel. He gave them many, many opportunities to repent and turn to Him. But Ahab insisted on having things his way. He did not give a second thought to God’s commands about the land. God’s way is always best, but Ahab and Jezebel thought that they knew better than God.

ELIJAH CONDEMNS AHAZIAH - LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

2 Kings 1:3-4:- “But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, “Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria (Ahaziah), and say to them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?’ Now therefore, thus says the

LORD: ‘You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’ ”

Ahaziah, just like his father Ahab, failed to understand this basic truth – God is the source of genuine peace and comfort in life and over the land. Everything Ahaziah did was weak, faithless, and miserable. He achieved nothing but ruin and failure through the following events:

- He let Moab rebel
- He hurt himself in a clumsy accident
- He foolishly attempted to use military force against Elijah
- And worse, he sought help for his healing in the wrong place—in Philistia at the altar of a pagan god

When he fell and hurt himself, he sent messengers to a pagan shrine in Ekron, a city in Philistia fifteen miles south of Joppa. There they were to “*inquire of Baal-Zebub*,” a localized version of Baal in injuries were fatal.

Elijah gets a word from the Lord to speak to Ahaziah. Previously, God had spoken to Elijah directly, but on this occasion, He spoke through an angel. Elijah, following the instructions of the angel,



angel, intercepted the messengers and sent them back to Samaria with a prophecy of Ahaziah's impending death (see **2 Kings 1:3-4**).

Then, in typical fashion, Elijah abruptly disappeared. Ahaziah was surprised that the messengers had returned so quickly from what should have been a long journey (v. 5) and demanded an explanation. They reported that an unexpected encounter with the prophet, whom they identified only as “*a man*,” had cut short their trip to Ekron. The King sent two captains with 50 soldiers each but Elijah called on the fire of God and consumed all. But in obedience to God's voice, he went with the third captain and repeated the same prophecy to Ahaziah and it came to pass.

ELIJAH AND THE CHARIOTS OF FIRE

2 Kings 2:11-12:- *“As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹²Elisha saw this and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!”*

2 Kings 2:1-11 is the story of the translation of Elijah which brings to a close his ministry on Earth. Elijah's translation and the events that surrounded it became a means of testing for Elisha, whom God had called to step into the shoes of the older prophet. Similarly, God works providentially in our lives through the events and lives of others.

Elijah found Elisha “*while he was ploughing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth.*” This seems to indicate that Elisha belonged to a family of considerable wealth. To obey the prophetic call would mean doing so at a considerable personal loss, financially speaking. It would mean counting the costs.

Elijah approached him and threw his mantle (cloak) over Elisha's shoulders, signifying Elisha's call to be his attendant and disciple. Elisha then kissed his parents goodbye, gave away all he owned, and “*arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.*” (1 Kings 19:19–21)

Towards the end of Elijah's ministry, he asks Elisha to stay where they were while he journeyed on as commanded by the Lord: first from ***Gilgal to Bethel***, then from ***Bethel to Jericho***, and finally from ***Jericho to Jordan***. At both Bethel and Jericho, there were schools for the training of prophets and seminaries for training young men to teach the Word and use their gifts for the Lord. Elijah was evidently the head of these schools and God was undoubtedly sending him to bid them farewell and to encourage them in their work before he was taken. Our text does not tell us why Elijah requested Elisha to stay behind. Some believe it was because of humility. Perhaps he did not want anyone to see the glorious thing that was about to happen to him, but God wanted a witness. Also, some believe Elijah was testing Elisha to see if he would walk the extra mile to receive the anointing because Elisha told him that he needs “*a double portion of your spirit be upon me.*” (2 Kings 2:9)

Each time, Elisha refused to stay behind. He said, “*As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.*” Elisha somehow sensed that being there at that time was vital to his calling and the fulfilment of the work God had called him to do. He was determined, by God’s grace, that nothing was going to keep him from being the person and the man God wanted.

It might seem to us that Elisha was being greedy by asking for a double portion of Elijah’s anointing or we might think that he wanted to become more famous than his master, Elijah. But that was not the case.



In Bible times, a double portion was the amount of property and belongings that a father gave to his oldest son. Now, Elijah was not Elisha’s actual father, but Elijah had become like a spiritual father to Elisha. Elijah told him that if God allowed him to see his master taken up into heaven, he would know that God had given him what he asked for.

Please Note: There is no such thing as greed when it comes to wanting more of God. Greed is the unrelinquished want of earthly things. The Bible says that being greedy for worldly things is sinful (Isaiah 57:17). However, God does not refuse those who want more of Him (Exodus 33:18-19). *Wanting to know God more, surrendering more control to*

the Holy Spirit, or wanting to see more of God's hand at work is exactly where God wants us to be!

Each of the four places that Elijah and Elisha travelled is mentioned in 2 Kings 2:1-6. These are highly significant in Israel's history and also symbolic of the spiritual stages in the life of a Christian:

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| A. Gilgal | B. Bethel |
| C. Jericho | D. Jordan |

Gilgal means the 'rolling' or 'roll-away' because God was saying to them 'I have rolled away the past. I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt, I have separated you from all those taunts that you would never enter the Promised Land.' They were now a separated people, separated from the past, but also separated unto a living God - which is what circumcision speaks of. As Joshua led the new generation of Israel into the Promised Land, they were circumcised in Gilgal. It was a sign that they had made a covenant with God. So, **Gilgal symbolically stands for 'separation' - being separated from the past and being separated unto God.**

Bethel means the 'House of God'. In Israel's history, it was Jacob who called a place 'Bethel'. This is where he experienced the divine presence and a vision of a heavenly ladder where angels were ascending and descending upon it. Bethel speaks to us about the Lord's presence. It is where He is! It is the desire to be in His presence. **The first stage is to do with separation. The second stage is to do with a desire for God and His presence.**

Jericho means “*City of Palms*” and it is believed to be one of the oldest cities in the world. Jericho was the first city conquered by Israel after crossing the Jordan River and occupying the Promised Land (Joshua 5:13—6:23). How did they conquer it? By walking around the walls with faith until the walls came tumbling down. **Jericho teaches us to walk by faith and to face every battle with God by our side.**

Jordan means “*to go down.*” Jordan, like the Israelites’ Red Sea experience, speaks to us of baptism - death and resurrection. **Jordan points to the practical application of ending their ‘self-life’ and entering ‘God-life’ the Promised Land that God designed for them.** At Jordan, the Lord Jesus was baptized, which signifies that He didn’t start His ministry out of Himself, but out of the Father, where He accepted the will of the Father - the cross as the basis of His ministry.

Elisha went as far as Elijah was going to take him. As Christians, we must press on with Jesus to take us as far as He desires. Like Paul said “*pressing on the higher calling of our God.*” Because Elisha was willing to follow Elijah, he was able to see Elijah translate into the heavenly realm, while receiving his mantle.

Elijah’s departure was even more spectacular than expected. The prophet knew there would be a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1), but the chariot and horses of fire were apparently a surprise. The great prophet Elijah, like Enoch, did not die

but was translated directly into heaven, leaving behind for Elisha his mantle and a double portion of his spirit which came from God. Returning to the Jordan and striking the waters of the river with the mantle again, Elisha made a statement “*Where is the LORD God of Elijah?*” God once again miraculously opened the river for Elisha to crossover. The prophets who were watching Elisha said: “*He has not abandoned us; He is now with Elisha as He was with Elijah.*”

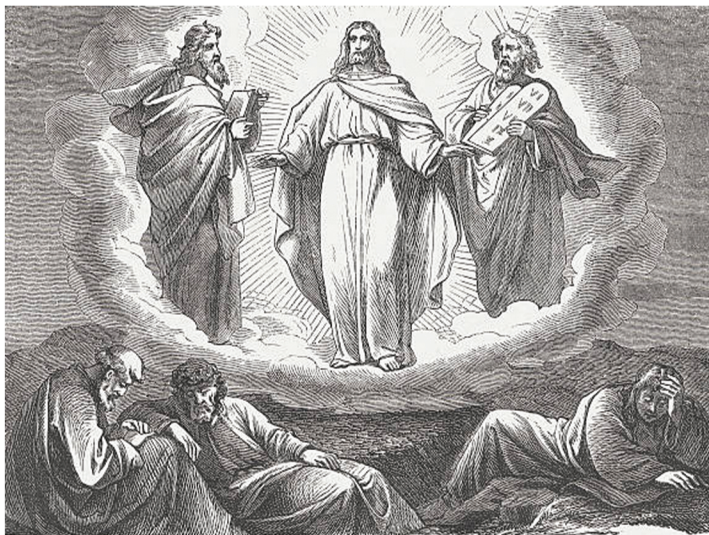
ELIJAH APPEARS ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

Luke 9:30-31:- “Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. 31 They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem.”

In the gospel accounts, Jesus and three of his apostles, Peter, James, and John, go to the Mount of Transfiguration to pray. On the mountaintop, Jesus begins to shine with bright rays of light and his clothes become as bright as a flash of lightning. Moses and Elijah appear next to him and He speaks with them.

Moses, the greatest law giver and Elijah, the greatest prophet met with God on Mount Horeb, which makes it fitting that they also meet with Jesus – the Son of God on a mountain. But God’s voice from heaven – “*Listen to Him!*” - clearly interrupted the conversations and showed that the

Law and the Prophets must give way to Jesus. The One who is the new and living way was replacing the old – He is the fulfilment of the Law and the countless prophecies in the Old Testament. Also, in His glorified form they saw a preview of His coming glorification and enthronement as King of kings and Lord of lords.



There is a final fascinating mention of Elijah in the Bible which does not actually mention him by name. In the Bible’s final book, Revelation Chapter 11, “*two witnesses*” show up who look strikingly like Moses and Elijah. Like Moses, these apocalyptic figures turn waters into blood and strike the earth with plagues. Like Elijah, they shut up the sky so it does not rain, and they devour their enemies with fire.

In Jesus, the offices of the king and prophet come in union together. If, while you’re reading 1 and 2 Kings, the

continual clash between the kings and prophets causes you to ache for something or someone better, you're right on track. It is preparing you for the arrival of Jesus, the perfect Prophet-King and He is here with us!

The 'Transfiguration' is considered one of the five milestones in the life of Jesus according to the Gospels, alongside his Baptism, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension.

Never again will the disciples mistake Jesus for being just a man. Peter later said in 2 Peter 1:16, "For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."

● CONCLUSION ●

Elijah truly is one of the greatest prophets of all time, a revivalist, a fugitive, a prayer warrior, a miracle worker, a depressed failure, a disciple maker, a messianic forerunner, to an iconic figure for the future.

Elijah is considered one of the most important prophets of the Old Testament. He faithfully carried out God's mission in the face of danger and hardship. His was a singular voice just like John the Baptist of "one crying in the wilderness" to rebuke sin in the land and to expose the false prophets and false religions of his day. Elijah was a man to prepare a way for God's kingdom and to make ready a people prepared to meet the Lord. So, the messages of Elijah and the other prophets of the Old Testament plays an important role in the establishment of the New Testament Church where Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone.



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