

ELIJAH, the Prophet of Fire.

Who is Elijah and what are we told about his appearance?

It was over fifty years since the times of King Solomon which had resulted in the peak of the Jewish nation. Since then ten of the tribes had revolted against king Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, due to the heavy demands of his reign, these were to become the Northern tribes known as Israel while the remainder became Judah.

Jeroboam, king of the Northern kingdom establish two places of worship, so preventing his people worshipping at Jerusalem. King Jeroboam set up golden calves at these places of worship and the ten tribes soon degraded their worship into idolatry and pagan religion,

[1 Kings 12:26-33](#).

This way of worship was to continue through many of the following rulers, some only being in the position for a few days before removal. Some did try to turn back to God in their worship and faith.

See [1 Kings 14:20 to 16:29](#).

God had great patience with this sinful people but regularly He sends a message through His servants to the king of the time warning of His anger and coming punishment. This continued until the 22 year reign of Ahab, who also established the worship of Baal as the official religion of his realm. This was probably due to him marrying Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon. It was by her action that the corrupt worship of the Phoenician god Melcham, (lord of the fly's), the Baal of this time. She was out to destroy any worship of the true God, happily killing any prophets of God,

[1 Kings 16:31-32](#);

[1 Kings 18:13](#).

It was during this time that God sent a special messenger to expose the terrible sins of his people, his name was Elijah. The name has the meaning "whose God is Yahweh(Jehovah)".

Elijah just appears, the Bible does not tell us where he came from other than the reference in

[1 Kings 17:1](#),

He was recorded as the "Tishbite who was from the region of Gilead." It mentions a town called Tishbe, south of Kadesh, but it is impossible to say whether this was the place referred to in the name given to the prophet.

No other information about his background is known. He was a 9th century prophet of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, who was one of the most unusual characters of Bible history. His description and his behaviour suggests he had a very masculine appearance and dress, the Bible suggests that he was similar to John the Baptist,

consider [2 Kings 1:8](#);

[Matthew 3:4](#).

The main events of his life.

1st. Event - Warnings are given.

[1 Kings 17:1](#).

We first hear of Elijah when he appears, without any warning or announcement, before the idolatrous king Ahab. Elijah announces that there is to be a very long drought for the area, there will be no rain for three and half years.

[1 Kings 17:1](#).

The idols of Baal were described as "gods of fertility." There is no record that the people objected to worship of this foreign idol, this shows their attitude to the True God at the time. The people of Israel were about to be shown that the True God of Israel has control over all things and could destroy any fertility the people thought they had received from the idols.

Following the announcement of the coming drought, Elijah is instructed by God to remove himself from the area, away from king Ahab's reach, to turn East towards the river Jordan. Elijah now journeys, as instructed, to one of the several small streams which flowed into the Jordan, the Brook Cherith.

2nd Event - Showing how God Cares for His people.

[1 Kings 17:2-16.](#)

God instructs Elijah to remain in the wilderness by the brook Cherith, he has water but no source of food, therefore Elijah now has to totally depend upon God to supply his food needs. The brook, for now, will provide the water but God uses an unusual way to provide the food. God used birds, the ravens. These birds are known to be mainly scavengers in their eating, most of their food comes from dead animals etc., because of this they were therefore considered unclean,

[Leviticus 11:13-15.](#)

God instructed the ravens to bring meat twice a day, the source was not revealed, though with the drought there would be many dead animals. Elijah had to accept in faith the fact that divine instruction provided his food.

[1 Kings 17:5,6.](#)

Put yourself in Elijah's place, would your faith be up to that?

Eventually, because there was no rain in the country the brook dries up, this tests Elijah's faith as he waits on God to now supply his food and water, it would not be easy for Elijah to wait for the command from God,

[1 Kings 17:7.](#)

It is very hard for any true Believer to obey God when He was given the command "to Wait."

3rd Event. Elijah at Zarephath.

[1 Kings 17:9-16.](#)

God now instructs Elijah to journey to a town called ZAREPHATH, today called Sarafend. A small village on the coast of the Mediterranean sea situated between Tyre and Sidon. A considerable distance to travel on foot during a drought and it could have been dangerous for him. It was from this area that Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, came from.

On arrival at the outside of the seriously drought affected city, Elijah observes a widow woman collecting wood and sticks to cook her last meal. God had already told Elijah *"See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."* Was this the woman?

Elijah approaches her and asks her for a drink of water and a piece of bread. She tells him that her food supplies are only a handful of flour and a small amount of oil in a jar, she was about to use them to cook her last meal for herself and her son.

How would you react to this situation, a stranger asking you for your last food?

Her reaction with the words "As the Lord your God lives," shows where her heart is. In faith she obeys Elijah when he said *"For thus says the Lord God of Israel.*

: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth. '" Throughout the rest of the drought God supplied oil and flour in a miraculous way to Elijah, also the woman and her son.

[1 Kings 17:15,16.](#)

4th Event. The boy is healed.

[1 Kings 17:17-24](#)

Sometime later the widows son became very sick and it appears that he died.

It was common practice in the time of Elijah to believe that any illness was punishment by God for a wrong action by the person(s) verse 18. The words by the widow *"bring my sin to remembrance,"* could suggest that there was a bad sin at sometime in her life, what that was we are not told. She thinks that her sons illness was punishment. Elijah's reaction to the boys illness indicates that it was not due to the judgement of a sin.

Elijah takes the dead child into his room. This action of touching a dead body makes him unclean,

[Leviticus 22:4-7,](#)

But this does not stop his next action. Once in his room he called upon God to restore the life of the child. Elijah had great faith that God would respond, God now gave the child back his life. This is the first record of a resurrection.

The living child is returned to the widow whose faith and trust in Elijah is greatly increased, the effect of this action now confirms that Elijah was a man from the true God.

5th Event. Elijah meets Obadiah.

[1 Kings 18:1-18.](#)

Elijah seems to have remained with the widow for over 2 years when God speaks to him again, God instructs Elijah to go to the evil Ahab to tell him that God was about to end the drought. This would have

been a suicidal risk for Elijah, as the soil of Israel was by now totally fruitless and producing no crops, there was no food available for the people. Elijah shows no sign of not wanting to go, He was no coward, but also place his safety in the Hands of his Lord. Ahab had been searching for Elijah and therefore was out to kill him.

As Elijah received his new instruction Ahab has instructed his steward or senior servant, whose name was Obadiah, to search for food and water for the kings animals. We are told that Obadiah "feared the Lord" and had been providing food and protection for one hundred of the prophets of God from the murdering Jezebel. God, for some reason wanted Obadiah to meet Elijah and take his message to Ahab.

[Luke 4:25](#)

[James 5:17](#)

These tell us that the drought was over three years old at this point in time. On the way to Ahab, as instructed by God, Elijah meets the chief servant of Ahab, called Obadiah, who was searching for water and grass for the animals of the king.

Obadiah immediately recognized the prophet, Elijah gave him a message to take to Ahab, *"Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'"* Obadiah is very frightened to take this message to Ahab because if Elijah fails to appear, redirected by God, he will die at the hand of Ahab. Elijah promised faithfully to the fearful Obadiah that he would come to Ahab that day.

When Ahab meets Elijah, he behaves like a spoilt child, *"Is that you, O troubler of Israel?"* Elijah response with the words *"the real problems is 'you and your father's house. It is you who have led the people to turn away from God for Baal worship.'"*

It was God's plan to show His power and presence by issuing a challenge to Ahab through Elijah. The challenge commenced with Elisha telling Ahab to bring all the *"the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah to Mount Carmel."*

Mount Carmel, is part of a mountain range which is about thirteen miles long in a South Easterly direction with the Western end finishing near Haifa. The range is made up of a number of peaks and ravines. It is on one of these peaks that Elijah chose to challenge the supporters of Baal, the heathen god of the Phoenicians. The Canaanites believed that this mountain range was the home of their god Baalim. This is probably the reason why God instructed Elijah to chose this place for the challenge.

6th Event. Elijah's challenge to Israel.

[1 Kings 18:20-24.](#)

Ahab sends out messages to call all the people and the prophets of Baal to come to Mount Carmel. Once assembled there, It was Elijah who had prophesied the drought,

[1 Kings 17:1](#)

Tells us that God caused the drought until the word of Elijah. The people would have thought that it was of Elijah's action, not as a result of the power of God, therefore Elijah's life would again be in danger from the people.

Elijah speaks to all the people, and said, *"How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him."* A clear decision must be made by the people, to worship Jehovah or Baal? If Jehovah, then all worship of Baal must end, Why? Because it is possible that many of the people were prepared to still keep both options open, they had done it before.

Elijah challenges the Jezebel's Prophets On Mount Carmel.

[1 Kings 18:25-35.](#)

The two opposing groups, Elijah and the 450 Baal priests, were to build an altar each, then they were to place the sacrificial animal on it, The animal was to be offered by fire on the altar, only the fire is not to be provided, that was to come personally from whoever is the real god. Which ever "god that answers by fire, He is the True God."

The test was very clear and it would leave no doubt in the minds of the people who was the real God.

The Prophets of Baal were first, they built the altar, prepared the animal sacrifice and placed it upon the altar. They now called upon the name of Baal, from the morning until midday, probably getting more and more frantic, but they received no response.

At noon Elijah starts to make fun of the Baal prophets, "Perhaps he is busy, why he is god, call louder, perhaps he is asleep, away on a journey, (some think this is referring to being away in the toilet)." Baal is not much of a god if he can only do one thing at a time!!!!

The Baal prophets now start to cut themselves, mutilate their bodies, working themselves up into an ecstasy, religious rapture, in an attempt to attract the attention of Baal. This situation continued until the evening.

Despite their efforts, there is no answer. -

[1 Kings 18:25-30.](#)

It is now the turn of Elijah, he repairs his altar, which was made of twelve stones signifying the tribes of Israel and it had been damaged by the behaviour of the prophets of Baal. In addition Elijah digs a deep trench round the base of the altar. Then putting the wood and the meat offering on the top requests a large quantity of water be poured over the offering, the wood and the stones, so much water that it filled the trench. Considering the fact of 3 years of drought and that this event is high on a hill, what did the people think as they had to bring up all the water. Everything was saturated with water, there was no way Elijah could have cheated by somehow hidden fire in or on the altar, there is only one way for the fire to be started, that was from a miracle source.

Elijah gives the Lord His titles, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel," then Elijah asks God to reveal Himself by fire. The fire descends and consumes not only the sacrifice, but the wood, the stones, and evaporates all the water from the area.

[1 Kings 18:36-38.](#)

The people had no choice, it was very obvious to them that Jehovah is the true God.

Even though it was obvious that Baal was a false god and "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel," was the true God it is the nature of people to ignore the truth, to make some excuse and still worship the false god of Baal, keep both options open!!! Therefore, Elijah orders "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" It was essential to total destroy the false prophets,

[1 Kings 18:39,40.](#)

Unfortunately, Baal worship was not totally destroyed that day,

[2 Kings 10:18-28](#) confirms this.

7th Event. **End of the drought.**

Elijah, tells Ahab to eat and drink for the rain is coming. Elijah is telling Ahab to use up your store of food and water as God was about to end the drought,

[1 Kings 18:41-45.](#)

While Ahab enjoyed himself Elijah now goes with his servant to pray, submitting himself to God. He tells his servant to go look out towards the sea, the Mediterranean, to look for a sign of rain. It is interesting that God delayed in creating the coming rain. Six times the servant is sent, each time nothing. On the seventh time he sees that a very small cloud has appeared. Elijah knows that God has responded, much rain is on the way, yet all the servant saw was a single small cloud as big as the hand of a man. Immediately Elijah tells Ahab and the people to get off the mountain and under cover. Ahab would not have been able to see any evidence of the cloud. But Elijah trusted God, the small cloud was rapidly growing, the sky was soon black as the storm approached.

8th Event. The arrival of the storm.

[1 Kings 18:41-46.](#)

Ahab rapidly travels in his chariot to Jezreel, located on Mount Gilboa about 20 miles away, this was the winter capital of Ahab. But God again revealed Himself by giving Elijah amazing power, to run faster than the horse drawn chariot, to race ahead of the chariot to Jezreel.

Ahab, on returning to the palace, reports the recent events to Jezebel his wife. It is obvious that she is the controller in this marriage, He tells her of what Elijah had done to her Baal prophets, how her prophets had been destroyed. Ahab fails under pressure, becomes like a child. Jezebel boils with anger against Elijah, her fury had no limits, her reputation as priestess of Baal worship was in danger. She takes over the decisions that should be the kings, she issues a message to Elijah, "What you have done to my prophets I will do to you by tomorrow." verse 2. Her threat to kill Elijah by tomorrow also contains a prophetic announcement of her future.

Elijah must have been full of praise for how God revealed Himself, but he did not know of the severe testing about to start.. During the past years he had been hiding from king Ahab and Jezebel. He had just faced an entire evil nation which opposed God, ending the three years of drought in prayer. Runs faster than a horse, by the power of God. We would have expected him to be full of faith, but on receiving Jezebel's message he was afraid and runs.

9th Event. **Elijah runs for his life to Beersheba.**

[1 Kings 19:1-18](#)

Amazingly, Elijah is scared stiff and runs for his life out of the Northern Kingdom into Judah, then under the control of Jehoshaphat.

Elijah has just got his priorities wrong, if he had thought a little he would have realized that God is far more powerful than Jezebel, what right has she to threaten the servant of God. Then he should have immediately taken the matter to God in prayer and let Him take over responsibility. But Elijah was mentally and physically exhausted, when all the recent pressure came off him he was emotionally burnt out, in this state we can all expand little things into mountains of problems.

At Beer-sheba Elijah leaves his servant and travels alone a days journey into the wilderness, the Negeb desert, to the south of Judah.

Elijah was now full of self pity as he sits under the Juniper tree. The recent events had obviously left their marks on him, *"It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"* Why did he have this thought? Elijah also had often moaned that he was the only servant of God, *"I alone am left a prophet of the Lord;"*

[1 Kings 18:22.](#)

But this was very wrong, God still had many thousand believers who were faithful to him, Elijah had met one, Obadiah, Ahab's servant.

How would you react to the Elijah situation? Many would just say "pull yourself together and get on with life." But this was not how God treated Elijah, the Lord gently picks him up and gets him right.

God was still very much in charge, He was working out His plan. First Elijah needs rest and food, so God provides both in a miracle.

[1 Kings 19:5-8.](#)

Like a nursemaid, the angel looks after Elijah, though God never sleeps He knows our limitations, understands the physical needs of His people.

Following the food and rest God instructs him to travel to Horeb, the mountain of God.

10th Event. God communicates with Elijah.

[1 Kings 19:9-18.](#)

On arrival Elijah finds a cave and spent the night there resting.

Gently God speaks to Elijah, *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"* Instead of telling him off for his action God asks a question, thus allowing Elijah to explain all of his problems, to open his heart to Him, verse 10. God does not respond by challenging Elijah's words, instead He told Elijah to *"Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord."*

Elijah is exposed to a violent destructive storm, and earthquake, a fire. Then in the quiet that follows, God speaks to Elijah. God knows that when we are in trouble He comes quietly, no noise or commotion. *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

Elijah is still full of self pity, he repeats his previous complaints, that he is alone, his life is in danger. Now gently God corrects Elijah, *"I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him. you not alone Elijah."* verse 18.

God manifests to him his glory, then redirects Elijah, *"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."*; Then God directs Elijah to one of those seven thousand, Elisha the son of Shaphat, who will be his companion until God calls Elijah home.

11th Event. A personal friend, Elisha.

[1 Kings 19:19-21.](#)

Elijah finds Elisha. as instructed by God, he was out plowing with twelve oxen, a possible sign that he had wealth. Elijah throws his coat over Elisha, verse 19. After saying good bye to his parents, distributes his personal farming equipment to God and his neighbour's. Elisha then commits himself to the Lord's service.

12th Event. Ahab, Naboth and God predicts the future of Ahab.

[1 Kings 21:1-28](#)

The Bible texts tells us of a sinful act by Ahab and Jezebel his wife. We are not told what Elijah and Elisha had been doing until God called him to go to Ahab after the evil act recorded.

Naboth was a Jezreelite who owned an area of ground on the Eastern slope of the hill of Jezreel,

[2 Kings 9:25,26.](#)

This small piece of ground was a vineyard, and it was near to the palace of Ahab, and Ahab wanted this piece of land for himself,

[1 Kings 21:1,2.](#)

Initially Ahab tries to buy the land, Naboth, however, refused on any terms to part with it to the king. He

had inherited it from his fathers, and no Israelite could lawfully sell his property,

[Leviticus 25:23.](#)

Jezebel, Ahab's wife, was very angry at the refusal of Naboth to part with his vineyard. She worked out a very evil and crafty plan to obtain the vineyard by getting two crooks to accusing him of blaspheme during an arranged feast. Punishment for blaspheme was to be stoned to death. His sons also shared his fate so making sure there was no one to inherit the land,

[2 Kings 9:26;](#)

[1 Kings 21:19.](#)

Jezebel then goes to Ahab and said, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." Ahab arose and went to the vineyard which had so treacherously been obtained.

"Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite," God instructs Elijah to go to Ahab and tell him of the judgement of God,

[1 Kings 21:17-24.](#) [2 Kings 9:26](#)

This indicates that Jehu and Bidcar were with Ahab at this time, and the words of Elijah remained in the memory of Jehu many years afterwards. It was Jehu who was involved in carrying out this punishment on Ahab and Jezebel and all their family.

[2 Kings 9:30-37.](#)

On hearing the words from God, though Elijah, Ahab humbled himself,

[1 Kings 21:28, 29.](#)

Therefore the prophecy was not fulfilled until his son Joram

[2 Kings 9:25.](#)

[1 Kings 22:1-38..](#)

King Ahab, who disguised himself and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah attacked the king of Syria and during the battle *"a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the Ahab king of Israel between the joints of his armor.*

So he said to the driver of his chariot, 'Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.'

The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot. Then, as the sun was going down, a shout went throughout the army, saying, 'Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!'

So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. Then someone washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of the Lord which He had spoken.

13th Event. Ahaziah the son of Ahab and Elijah.

[1 Kings 22:51-53](#)

[2 Kings 1:1-18.](#)

"Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; for he served Baal and worshiped him, and provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done."

Ahaziah is injured in a fall and sends messengers to the idol Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, a despicable town of the Philistines,

[Zechariah 9:7.](#)

The messengers were to find out if he will be healed. His sending to Baal-Zebub was very wicked; to ask for help from a dead and dumb idol. Baal-Zebub, the name actually means "the lord of a fly." The idol was one of the many Baal's, the answers coming by the power of the demons or the handy work of the priests. It is possible that there was a humming noise, like that of a great fly, associated with the worship.

God, through an angel, instructs Elijah to intercept these messengers, the message he delivered was that Ahaziah would not recover from the injury.

The words of Elijah with Ahaziah's messengers on the way to Ekron, and the later visit by the captains with their fifties, suggests that Elijah was in retirement, possibly on Mount Carmel.

The messengers return to king Ahaziah, he quickly realized that they had returned too quickly to have been to Ekron. They gave the message sent by Elijah. Ahaziah wants to know who sent the message, by their description of him, that it must be Elijah, verses 7,8. His dress was the same that he had seen him in, in his

father's presences. Compare description of John the Baptist,

[Matthew 3:4.](#)

If the idol at Ekron had told him that he will not be healed Ahaziah would probably accepted it but a prophet of the Lord tells him, this reminding him of the God of Israel, he does not like it, also reminds him of his evil nature, therefore Ahaziah sends armed soldiers to arrest Elijah.

Elijah is found on the top of a hill, the captain demanded "Man of God, the king has said, 'Come down!'" The soldier obviously did not believe that Elijah was a "Man of God," by the answer given by Elijah, *"If I am a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men."* Fire came down and destroyed the men, to prove his position, and to show the anger of God against the evil, ungodly men. Ahaziah sent a further fifty men and the same happens. On arrival of the third fifty men the captain humbles himself before Elijah and requests safety for his men and himself.

God instructs Elijah to go with the soldiers to Ahaziah, there he personally delivers the message from God, "Because you turned for help from an idol and ignored God you will die." - *"So Ahaziah died according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken."*

14th Event. **The departure of Elijah.**

[2 Kings 2:1-12](#)

Elijah seems to know what the future holds for him, he and Elisha make a journey to Gilgal, there Elijah tells Elisha to remain but he refuses, together they go onto Bethel, to a school of prophets, there the prophets tell Elisha that God was about to take Elijah, Elisha knew that it was his duty to remain with his master, Elisha refused to leave Elijah. "So the two of them went on." to the Jordan watched by the prophets. On reaching the river Elijah strikes the river with his rolled up cloak, the water parted and they walked across the river bed.

As they walked "Elijah said to Elisha, *"Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?"* Elisha responded, *"Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."* "If you remain with me until I am taken by God then it will be so," was Elijah's reply. They were suddenly separated by a chariot of fire with horses of fire, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Elisha pick up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and took his place as the messenger of God.

Elijah left a strong impression of the Jewish nation due to the words given in

[Malachi 4:5,6.](#)

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet

Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

And he will turn

The hearts of the fathers to the children,

And the hearts of the children to their fathers,

Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.";

Was John the Baptist the Elijah prophesied?

Elijah's appearance in glory on the mount of transfiguration does not seem to have startled the disciples.

[Matthew 17:1-8;](#)

[Mark 9:2-8;](#)

[Luke 9:28-36.](#)