

LIVING GODS WILL

Prophet of God

ELIJAH



Elijah Taken Up Into Heaven by Pieter Symonsz Potter

Born: 900 BC, Tishbe in Gilead

Died: 849 BC, taken up to heaven alive by God

Elijah was a prophet of **God**.

Elijah performed many miracles.

Elijah was taken up to heaven alive by **God**.

The prophet **Elijah** is one of the most interesting and colorful people in the Bible, and **God** used him during an important time in Israel's history to oppose a wicked king and bring revival to the land.

Elijah's ministry marked the beginning of the end of Baal worship in Israel. **Elijah's** life was filled with turmoil.

At times he was bold and decisive, and at other times fearful and tentative. He alternately demonstrates victory and defeat, followed by recovery. **Elijah** knew both the power of **God** and the depths of depression.

Elijah, a prophet of **God** whose name means "my God is the Lord," came from Tishbeh in Gilead, but nothing is known of his family or birth.

We first meet **Elijah** in **1 Kings 17:1** when he suddenly appears to challenge Ahab, an evil king who ruled the northern kingdom from **874 to 853 BC**.

Elijah prophesies a drought to come upon the whole land as consequence for Ahab's evil (**1 Kings 17:1-7**). Warned by **God**, **Elijah** hides near the brook of Cherith where he is fed by ravens.

As the drought and famine in the land deepen, **Elijah** meets with a widow in a neighboring country, and, through her obedience to **Elijah's** request, **God** provides food enough for **Elijah**, the woman, and her son.

Miraculously, the widow's barrel of flour and jar of oil never run out (**1 Kings 17:8-16**). The lesson for the believer is that, if we walk in fellowship with the **Lord** and obey Him, we will be open to His will. And when we are in **God's** will, He fulfills all of our needs, and His mercy to us never runs short.

We next see **Elijah** as the central character in a face-off with the prophets of the false god Baal on Mount Carmel (**1 Kings 18:17-40**). The prophets of Baal call upon their god all day long to rain fire from heaven to no avail.

Then **Elijah** builds an altar of stones, digs a ditch around it, puts the sacrifice on the top of wood and calls for water to be poured over his sacrifice three times.

Elijah calls upon **God**, and **God** sends fire down from heaven, burns the sacrifice, the wood, and the stones and licks up the water in the ditch. **God** proved He was more powerful than false gods.

It was then that **Elijah** and the people killed all of the false prophets of Baal, in compliance with **God's** command in **Deuteronomy 13:5**.

After the great victory over the false prophets, rain once again fell on the land (**1 Kings 18:41-46**). However, in spite of victory, **Elijah** entered a period of wavering faith and depression (**1 Kings 19:1-18**).

Elijah had just had a "mountaintop experience" in defeating the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. Fire had descended from heaven, the people of Israel acknowledged the **Lord**, and the false prophets were all put to death.

But that experience was followed by an episode of fear and failure in **Elijah's** life: the prophet was afraid and ran for his life from Queen Jezebel. The reason is made clear in **1 Kings 19:1-2**:

"Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.'"

This death threat caused **Elijah** to flee a day's journey into the wilderness (**1 Kings 19:4**). At one point **Elijah** was so discouraged that he desired to die:

"And he asked that he might die, saying, 'It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers'" (**verse 4**).

In response, the **Lord** sent an angel to bring the prophet food and drink both before and after he slept. After the rest and nourishment, **Elijah** took a forty-day journey to Mount Horeb to meet with the **Lord** (**1 Kings 19:6-8**).

There, the **Lord** asked **Elijah** why he had fled to such a remote location. **Elijah's** answer is telling:

"The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too" (**verse 10**).

Elijah saw himself as the lone defender of **God's** name in Israel. Jezebel seemed to be winning the fight, and **Elijah** had fled.

It is then that the **LORD** instructed **Elijah** to stand on the mountain as the **LORD** passed by. There was a great wind, an earthquake, and then fire, but **God** was not in any of those. Then came a still, small voice in which **Elijah** heard **God** and understood Him.

God gave **Elijah** instructions for what to do next, including anointing **Elisha** to take his place as prophet and assuring **Elijah** that there were still 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed to Baal.

Elijah obeyed **God's** commands. **Elisha** became **Elijah's** assistant for some time, and the two continued to deal with Ahab and Jezebel, as well as Ahab's son and successor, Ahaziah.

Rather than die a natural death, **Elijah** was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (**2 Kings 2:1-11**).

During his conversation with **God** at Horeb, the Lord gave **Elijah** three important tasks. First, **Elijah** was to anoint Hazael as king over Syria (**1 Kings 19:15**). Second, he was to anoint Jehu as king of Israel (**verse 16**). Third, he was to anoint **Elisha** as the prophet to take his place (**verse 16**).

These leaders would help turn Israel away from the evil of idol worship and would facilitate the total destruction of the wicked line of Ahab and Jezebel:

"And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death" (1 Kings 19:17).

Elijah had dealt a death-blow to Baal-worship in Israel, and the three men **Elijah** would anoint would remove the remaining vestiges of that particular form of idolatry.

In addition, **God** offered one important word of comfort to **Elijah**. During this time when the prophet felt so alone, **God** said,

"Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18).

Elijah had thought he was the only one faithful to the **Lord**, and he took great comfort in the knowledge that thousands of others had never bowed to Baal.

John the Baptist's ministry was marked by **"the spirit and power of Elijah"** (**Luke 1:17**), fulfilling the prophecy of **Malachi 4:5-6**.

James uses **Elijah** as an example of prayer in **James 5:17-18**. He says that **Elijah** **"was a human being, even as we are,"** yet he prayed that it would not rain, and it did not.

Then he prayed that it would rain, and it did. The power of prayer is in **God**, not in our own human nature.

As was true for **Elijah**, when we focus on the tumult of life in this world, we can get our eyes off of the **LORD** and become discouraged.

God does display Himself in mighty works of power and judgment such as wind, fire, and earthquakes. But He also relates with us intimately and personally, such as in the quiet whisper.

God meets our physical needs, encourages us to examine our own thoughts and behaviors, instructs us in how to proceed, and assures us that we are not alone.

When we are attentive to **God's** voice and walking in obedience to His Word, we can find encouragement, victory, and reward. **Elijah** struggled with typical human frailties, yet he was used mightily of **God**.

It may not be through such obviously miraculous displays of might, but, if we are yielded to Him, **God** can use us powerfully for His kingdom purposes, too.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

2nd Kings 2:11 Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

2nd Kings 1:8 They answered him, "He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

Malachi 4:5 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

1st Kings 18:40 And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.

1st Kings 17:19 And he said to her, "Give me your son." So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. Then he cried out to the Lord and said, "O Lord my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?" And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the Lord and said, "O Lord my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him." Then the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives!" Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth."



Elijah Fed By The Raven by Lazzaro Baldi