

# Elijah: Prophet on the Run

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

A. 2Kings 2:9-14

B. Biography of the prophet Elijah

1. Elijah is from Eliyahu, meaning "My God is Yahweh" or Jehovah
2. Elijah the Tishbite of Tishbe in Gilead. Tishbe is sometimes interpreted as "stranger," so that the verse might read "Elijah, a stranger among the strangers in Gilead." No background for the person of Elijah is given in scripture or in history. His parents are unknown.
3. Scholars and historians are divided over whether or not Elijah was an Israelite. His homeland was at the northeastern edge of what could be considered the territory of Naphtali, but he was a Tishbite of Gilead
  - a. "Elijah the Tishbite" - 1Kings 17:1, 21:17, 28; 2Kings 1:3, 8, 9:36
  - 1) Gileadites - Judges 12:4-6
  - b. There were other non-Israelite prophets: Balaam
  - c. The lack of tribe or parentage is rare for an Israelite.
  - d. He was a prophet from the north, sent exclusively to the northern ten tribes of Israel; we do not read of him prophesying in Judah
4. Highlights of a prophet ranked with Moses - Matt. 17:3
  - a. Elijah travels for forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb, where Moses received the Ten Commandments. He is the only person described in the Bible as returning to Horeb, after Moses and Israel left Horeb several centuries before. He also fasted 40 days and nights; God spoke to him on Horeb - 1Kings 19:8
  - b. 1Kings 17:22 relates how God "heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." This is the first instance of raising the dead recorded in Scripture. This non-Israelite widow was granted the best covenant blessing in the person of her son, the only hope for a widow in ancient society. Luke 4:25-26
  - c. Ahaziah is seriously injured in a fall. He sends to the priests of Baalzebub in Ekron, outside the kingdom of Israel, to learn if he will recover. Elijah intercepts his messengers and sends them back to Ahaziah with a message. In typical Elijah fashion, the message begins with a blunt, impertinent question: "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron?" - 2Kings 1:6
  - d. Elijah, in company with Elisha, approaches the Jordan. He rolls up his mantle and strikes the water (2Kings 2:8). The water immediately divides and Elijah and Elisha cross on dry land, The first to do so since the Exodus. Suddenly, a chariot of fire and horses of fire appear and Elijah is lifted up in a whirlwind, the first to do so in the history of the world. As Elijah is lifted up, his mantle falls to the ground and Elisha picks it up. God told Elijah that Elisha would succeed him in 1Kings 19:16 and to anoint him.

- C. The man who would follow what may arguably be the greatest prophet between Moses and Christ; Elisha must follow Elijah
- D. He had a gift for running - 1Kings 18:45-46 - describe conditions
  - 1. On the run to Jezreel; a superhuman run through mud for 31 miles, outrunning the royal chariot

## **I. ON THE RUN FOR HIS LIFE**

- A. His life is threatened by Jezebel
  - 1. Forced to flee to Beersheba in Judah - 1Kings 19:1-3
  - 2. His despondency and desire for death - 1Kings 19:4
- B. His journey to Mount Horeb
  - 1. The provisions by an angel - 1Kings 19:5-8
- C. His discouragement and the Lord's response
  - 1. Despite his success, he feels all is gone astray - 1Kings 19:9-10
  - 2. The lesson from the Lord - 1Kings 19:11-12
  - 3. Elijah's despondency remains - 1Kings 19:13-14
  - 4. The Lord's new duties for Elijah - 1Kings 19:15-18
  - 5. Elisha becomes Elijah's servant - 1Kings 19:19-21

## **II. CARRYING MESSAGES TO AHAB AND AHAZIAH**

- A. Jezebel has Naboth killed so Ahab can have his vineyard - 1Kings 21:1-16
  - 1. Elijah announces shameful deaths for Ahab & Jezebel 1Kings 21:17-26
  - 2. Ahab's humility delays judgment - 1Kings 21:27-29
- B. An injured Ahaziah, son of Ahab, sends an inquiry to Baal-Zebub 2Kings 1:1-2
  - 1. Elijah is sent to turn the messengers back to Ahaziah with a rebuke and a prophecy concerning his death - 2Kings 1:3-8
  - 2. Three companies of soldiers are sent to bring Elijah to the king
    - a. Two are consumed by fire from heaven - 2Kings 1:9-12
    - b. The third is spared by the plea of its captain - 2Kings 1:13-15
  - 3. Elijah rebukes Ahaziah & foretells his death in person - 2Kings 1:16-17

## **III. HIS WHIRLWIND JOURNEY TO HEAVEN**

- A. Elisha accompanies Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, to Jericho - 2Kings 2:1-5
  - 1. Elijah through humility does not wish for anyone to see the honor about to be given him by God
- B. Elisha accompanies Elijah across the Jordan River - 2Kings 2:6-10
  - 1. Silences the pettiness of the schools of prophets
  - 2. Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah's spirit; it is a hard thing; Elijah seems to think that he doesn't know what he is asking for
- C. Elijah is transported to heaven - 2Kings 2:11-18

## **IV. ELIJAH'S MESSAGE**

- A. The power of prayer - James 5:16-18; 1Kings 18:41-45
  - 1. Do we have confidence in prayer? - Mark 11:24; 1John 5:14-15
- B. The Providence of God
  - 1. God provided time and again for the needs of Elijah

- a. By the Brook Cherith, through the ravens that brought him food
  - b. At the house of the widow at Zarephath
  - c. Fleeing from Jezebel, when an angel brought him bread and water, and he survived on it for 40 days
- 2. Do we trust in the providential care of God?
  - a. Matt. 6:31-34; Mark 10:29-30; 2Cor. 9:8
- C. The challenge of discouragement
  - 1. Elijah was not beyond becoming discouraged and depressed
    - a. He wanted to die, feeling that he had failed; He had been zealous for the Lord, but thought that no one listened - 1Kings 19
    - b. The Lord's response was to put Elijah to work, and reveal that he was not alone - 1Kings 19:15-18
  - 2. Do we find ourselves discouraged and depressed?
    - a. 2Cor. 7:5-6; 1:3-4
  - 3. The answer is still the same:
    - a. Get busy with something productive and useful
    - b. And understand that we are not alone
    - c. Elijah was not permitted to sit in a dark cave feeling sorry for himself, praying to die, and talking himself into believing and talking himself into believing that things would never improve; and we are not permitted to do that, either
- D. The serious consequences of sin
  - 1. The judgment on the prophets of Baal; the deaths of Jezebel and Ahab
  - 2. Do we believe we are exempt from the consequences of sin?
    - a. The physical toll often experienced in this life?
    - b. The spiritual toll experienced in this life and the one to come?
    - c. Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8
- E. The hope of the righteous
  - 1. Elijah illustrates the hope of the righteous who persevere to the end
    - a. He was translated to heaven, so death had no power over him
    - b. He appeared in glory when Jesus was transfigured, conversing with Him - Luke 9:28-31
  - 2. What is the hope of the righteous today who persevere to the end?
    - a. 1Cor. 15:50-54; 1Thes. 4:14-17