

THE LIFE OF ELIJAH

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BIBLICAL STUDIES

Abstract

In 1 Kings 17 we see Elijah was willing to take great risks to stand for the Word of God before kings, widows, defying law, logic, and even the weather. It took confidence to tell the king it wouldn't rain. It took courage to tell the woman that she could give up her last bit of flour and oil because God would ensure that her jar would never run out. When his faith was tested further in the death of the widow's son, Elijah dug in with a deeper, more tenacious faith. God responded by healing the boy. The woman was convinced that Elijah came from God and that his word was truth by the miracles he would perform.

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CHAPTER I

”Elijah the Tishbite”

Elijah, a fiery prophet of God appears on the scene to address King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. According to 1 Kings Chapter 17, Elijah of the Prophet proclaimed there would be a three year drought in the land. Elijah is considered one of the greatest Old Testament prophets of his time.

Elijah was considered a rugged prophet in the Old Testament as he lived on little; without the comforts of most. Elijah's very name means the “Lord is God” and his ministry corresponded with his name as he declared to Israel that there was a Lord God in heaven and there was no other like Him.

Elijah lives in a town called Tishbe near the River Jordan. The yearly rains were a necessity for crop growth to feed the people. Needless to say when he confronts King Ahab and prays that there would be no rain; this was a major concern to all the people. If there is no rain, then there will be no water or crops to feed the people or livestock; thus bringing massive drought, severe famine and the death of many people.

First Kings Chapter 16:30-33, says the of LORD came to the Prophet Elijah as he confronts King Ahab and Queen Jezebel regarding their idol worship of Baal. Jezebel was a foreign-born wife married to King Ahab. She used her political influence as the Queen to sway and influence the king, his subjects and the worshipers of the One true God; in hopes to turn their affections away from the Lord God to false idol worship. We can see how the enemy uses people to infiltrate political offices to sway public perception and mindsets among the people. We also see that Jezebel murders everyone that doesn't worship the gods that she worships and does not submit to her.

CHAPTER II

“The Battle Begins”

Elijah is then commanded by God go to Zarephath by the Brook Cherith. He is led into a territory that is controlled by Ahab's father-in-law, Ethbaal. Elijah is in essence sent right into the enemy's territory, yet he goes undetected as God makes preparation and equips Elijah with supernatural protection. They would never think to look for Elijah in their own backyard.

God tells Elijah that he has made provision for him and a widow woman who will care for him in Zarephath. In this renowned story we see that Elijah asks the widow woman for a cup of water and a cake of bread but she says she has none. She will use her last bit of oil and meal to make food for her son and then they will die because of the famine. Elijah pleads with her to give him a morsel of bread and she reminds him, that she just told him that she will make her last bit of meal and use her last drops of oil for her and her son and then, they will die.

As a mother, I have no idea what this woman would have been feeling or what she thought. As this man Elijah, who claimed to be a prophet of God asks her to feed him first and sacrifice her son and herself. I'm sure that one of the thoughts going through her mind may have been that if she complied; she had nothing to lose because her and her son eating the last cake would only prolong the inevitable at this point.

Elijah tells her not to fear and that if she uses her last bit of meal to make him a cake, God will give her provision; her jar of oil and her pot of flour will never be dry during the drought. In the story we see a great testimony of faith by this widow woman and we also see the power of the living God at work. She does what Elijah asks and prepares her last cake using the last drops of oil and feeds the prophet of God. During the entire drought God makes a

supernatural provision for Elijah, the widow and her son. They see God moving in their lives daily, in miracles wonders and signs.

The widow woman had to take Elijah at his word believing that he was a true prophet of God and believing in something that she could not physically see. Faith is the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1). Here we see a supernatural manifestation in the natural. Elijah petitions God; then, God shows himself to be the One true God. Little did the people in the land of Israel know that God would do greater miracles in their hearing and in their sight in the days to come. Elijah goes to the throne of God on behalf of himself and this family and God shows up in a tangible way.

As time passes, we see the widow woman's son becomes ill. He has a sickness that eventually takes his life. The widow woman confronts Elijah and asks him if he had come to bring her sin to God's remembrance to kill her son. The widow and Elijah are both distraught and Elijah tells her to give him her son; he takes the boy to the upper room and lays him on the bed.

Elijah prays and asks God why this tragedy has come upon the widow that he is lodging with. The Bible says in 1 Kings 17:17-24 that Elijah stretches out over the child three times and Elijah asks the Lord, to let this child's soul come back to him. The Lord hears the voice of Elijah; the soul of a child comes back into his body and he is revived or resurrected. Elijah takes the child from the upper room and gives him to his mother and tells her that her son lives. Then the widow woman says,

“Now, I know that you are a man of God and the word in your mouth is the word of the LORD and you speak truth.” I guess that little flour and oil miracle didn't count?

CHAPTER III

“From Zarephath to Mount Carmel”

The word of the Lord comes to Elijah and he is told to go present himself to King Ahab and that the days of drought are coming to an end as they near the three year mark. God will make it rain upon the earth. When Elijah returns to confront Ahab he finds out from Obadiah, (A servant in Ahab's house) that Jezebel has slaughtered all but 150 prophets of the living God. Obadiah hides the prophets in a cave and gives them bread and water during the famine. As Obadiah is exploring the area he is suddenly met by Elijah and he tells Obadiah to go tell Ahab that he has returned. Obadiah pleads with Elijah telling him that if he goes to Ahab and tells him that Elijah is back; this would surely be Elijah's death sentence. Ahab looked for Elijah in many different lands and countries and was unable to locate him. I do not think they ever thought to look for Elijah and his father-in-law's country. God was able to protect Elijah right under the enemy's nose.

After much conversation Elijah tells Obadiah that he will present himself to Ahab. First Kings Chapter 18:17 says, *“That it happened when Ahab saw Elijah and Ahab said to him, “Is that you O troubleor of Israel?”*

I think at this point it's safe to say that Ahab doesn't get it; after three years of drought he actually thinks Elijah is the cause of the drought; when it is Ahab and Jezebel's worship of false idols that lead the people astray; which resulted in the drought. We see that after all this time, heir idols have no power. Their idols are made of wood and stone and they are not capable of correcting the drought or sending rain. At the heart of this matter Jezebel controlled King Ahab. She also controlled the false idols of Israel; she was the one that craved the worship of Ahab

along the people. She had set herself up as an idol in God's place. At the heart of the matter Jezebel was rendered impotent and useless and she ran the puppet government of Israel.

Elijah sets the record straight and tells Ahab that he is not the “Troubler of Israel” Ahab is! Israel is forsaking the true and living God and by worshiping false idols invited the judgment of God upon them. Ahab also allows the prophets of the false gods to eat at Jezebel's table, therefore, giving the prophets of Baal prominence at the King's table.

In first Kings Chapter 18:21 Elijah goes to the people and asks them how long will they falter between two opinions, if the Lord is God follow him, if Baal is God follow Him, and the people did not say a word. At this point, Elijah had given the people of Israel and King Ahab an ultimatum. They had not totally rejected the God of Israel, but had incorporated worshiping the true and living God with false gods and they had to choose, because they could not worship both.

(You cannot be in sin and expect blessing, there is a penalty for foolish choices.)

Elijah is the lone prophet of the true and living God and he challenges the 450 prophets of Baal. Elijah tells them to get two bulls and to choose one for themselves and one for him. They are to prepare the bull as an offering to their respective gods and meet at the base of Mount Carmel. Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal would make an altar, prepare their offering and call upon the name of their god and Elijah will call upon the name of the living God and the God that answers by fire, let Him be God.

Elijah allows the 450 prophets of Baal call on the name of their god. They called upon their false god from morning until noontime; they cried and they cut themselves until they bled, as that was their custom. Elijah mocked them and asked them if their god was out meditating, on a journey, or in the bathroom.

Elijah asked the people to come and help him repair the altar of the LORD that had been in disrepair and broken down. The condition of the altar was also representative of the people's lives that have been broken down and in disrepair due to their lack of obedience and worship to the living God. They picked up 12 stones according to the number of the tribes of Jacob. Elijah had them dig a trench around the altar of God and has the people bring water pots filled, to pour on the wood of the sacrifice; he has them do this three times. In the midst of the drought they must have thought that Elijah was insane for wasting water. Elijah bows and he prays and he says.

“Oh Lord that this people may know that you are the Lord God and that you have turned their hearts back to you again.” I Kings 18:37

The fire of the Lord falls from heaven, consumes the burnt sacrifice, wood, stones and the water that was in the trenches. The people saw this, they fell on their faces and they were terrified. They all said, “The LORD is God!”

Elijah then calls for the execution of the 450 prophets of Baal and the 450 prophets of Ashera. Elijah goes up to the top of Mount Carmel, bows down to pray and sends his servant seven times to look for the rain cloud. The first six times the servant did not see the cloud however, Elijah had faith and said “I see a cloud the size of a man's hand” then, Elijah proclaimed that the drought was over.

In the meantime, the Bible says that the sky became black with clouds and the heavy rain began to pour upon him and the Lord came upon Elijah as he ran ahead of Ahab's chariot to the entrance of Jezreel. In 1Kings 19:1-3 Jezebel had heard that her prophets had been slain, so Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to threaten his life. Even after Elijah had seen miracles of

supernatural provision, a boy being raised from the dead, and the fire fall from heaven he feared Jezebel.

The Bible tells us that Elijah needed rest. An angel of the Lord appeared to him twice, with water and a cake of meal to restore his body (1 Kings 19:5-). God asks Elijah why he is hiding under the tree and asks him what he is doing there. Elijah tells God that Jezebel is trying to take his life. Sometimes, we let fear override what we know to be true that God is faithful, loving, just, righteous, and he wants what's best for his children. Although we have seen miracles in our lives, we just can't bring ourselves to believe that there is a God in heaven that reveals mysteries and we talk ourselves out of what we know to be true. We also forget that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

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SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Chapter 1

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." NKJV

1 Kings 16:30-33 Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. 31 And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. 32 Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. NKJV

Chapter 2

Heb 11:1-2 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. NKJV

1 Kings 17:17-24 Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him. 18 So she said to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?" 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. 20 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?" 21 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." 22 Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. 23 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!" 24 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." NKJV

Chapter 3

1 Kings 18:17 Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" NKJV

1 Kings 18:21 And Elijah came 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." But the people answered him not a word. NKJV

1 Kings 18:37-39 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." 38 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!" NKJV

1 Kings 19:1-3 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then 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." 3 And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. NKJV

1 Kings 19:5-8 Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." 6 Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. 7 And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." 8 So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. NKJV

Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. NKJV