

Elijah

Introduction

Like most of the non-literary prophets, the call and early life of the Elijah are not revealed. Unlike Isaiah, Jeremiah or even Elisha, when and how Elijah became a prophet are a mystery. Even at his introduction with the drought in Israel, there is no clear indication whether Elijah is already prophet. Even James only calls Elijah "a man with a like nature like ours." Perhaps the answer to this issue is that through this fervent prayer, God called Elijah and not only gave him an affirmative answer, but called him to become a prophet through whom God would work.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit. Jas 5:17-18

Here is what we know:

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." 2 Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 3 "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. 4 And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." 1 Kings 17:1-4

It seems fairly clear, since "the word of the Lord came to him" right after he made this proclamation, it is probably, possible and even likely that it had also come to him before. There is no agreement among the encyclopedias or commentaries as to where Elijah was born or came from. Even *Tishbe* is not easily located and Gilead covers a large territory including East Manasseh and Gad.

The Drought of Three and a Half Years

His name in Hebrew is *ēlîyâ* or *‘ēlîyāhu*: "my God is Jehovah" or "Yah is God" "God Jehovah is He." He simply appears at this moment to warn Ahab of the coming drought. This was a threat God had given to Israel before they ever entered the promised land.

*Now it shall come to pass, **if you diligently obey** the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, ... 12 the Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to **give the rain to your land in its season**, and to bless all the work of your hand. 15 "But it shall come to pass, **if you do not obey** the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today 23 And **your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron.** 24 The Lord will **change the rain of your land to powder and dust**; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. Deut 28:1, 12, 15, 23-24*

After delivering the message, Elijah was told to leave and hide. God evidently knew that Jezebel would quickly kill him if he remained. He is told to hide by a brook that flows into the Jordan. He also promised Elijah that by His command the ravens would bring him food. Each morning and each evening the ravens would bring food to him. We have no time frame, but the drought eventually caused the brooks and rivers to dry up.

So he went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. 7 And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. 1Kings 17:5-7

The Widow of Zarephath

The "word of the Lord again comes to Elijah instructing him to go to Zarephath which is about 10 miles below Sidon on the Coast. God has somehow commanded this widow to provide for him.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 9 "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." 1Kings 17:8-9

When Elijah arrives he finds the widow living under dire circumstances likely facing most of the people during this drought. Her food has nearly been depleted as she only has a handful of flour

and a little oil left. So when Elijah asked for something to eat, she explained her circumstances.

So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink." 11 And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." 12 So she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." 1 Kings 17:10-12

Jesus spoke of this event during His Ministry. He adds that there were many widows in Israel, but God sent Elijah to this widow. Hence the widow was commanded to feed Elijah and Elijah was sent to the widow to provide for her.

Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. 25 But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; 26 but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. Luke 4:24-27

While there, God continued to provide for them by replenishing the flour bin and oil jar for as long as Elijah stayed with her.

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." 15 So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. 16 The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah. 1Kings 17:14-16

The First Resurrection

As life proceeded, we do not know what Elijah did during that three year period. It must have been a lonely and frustrating experience to be alone all that time at the brook and to be staying with a widow. During that three and a half year period, Elijah simply waited. During this waiting period, the son of the widow became ill and died of his illness. Like so many, the widow takes this personally as though God is trying to tell her something.

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?" 1 Kings 17:17-18

Elijah proves the error of this statement by bringing the son back to life. This is the first example of such a miracle in the Bible. While Moses was allowed to be a part of the ten plagues and the bringing of water to Israel, he didn't perform any miracles like this. Again, we don't know if this was done at the command of the Lord or if Elijah took it on himself to plead with the Lord, but it appears from the account that he was pleading with God through prayer.

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. 1Kings 17:19-22

Although one would have thought that the food continuing through the drought would have been enough, the result of the miracle was to increase the faith of the widow.

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." 1Kings 17:23-24

The Drought comes to an End

After the "three years and six months" revealed in James, God appeared again to Elijah commanding him to return to Israel.

And it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth." 1Kings 18:1

Since Elijah had revealed that this rain would only come at the his word, God was working through Elijah to show that the drought came from him and influence as many as possible.

The long famine had taken its toll on the ten tribes of Israel. Nothing is said about Judah, but they were in the midst of the forty-one year of Asa and his son Jehoshaphat started his reign in the fourth year of Ahab's and reigned 25 years. They had 66 years of being reigned over by two good kings, so there was no reason for the drought to affect them.

Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. 42 Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 43 And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord. 1Kings 22:41-43

Things had become so dire that Ahab and Obadiah split up the land to search for some spring of source that would have kept the pasture green. Elijah chose to appear before one of the few righteous men in Israel.

Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly. 4 For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.) 5 And Ahab had said to Obadiah, "Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so that we will not have to kill any livestock." 6 So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. 7 Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, "Is that you, my lord Elijah?" 8 And he answered him, "It is I. Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'" 1Kings 18:3-8

Instead of being filled with joy, Obadiah is filled with dread. Ahab has sought and searched everywhere for Elijah, and his ability to disappear appears to have become legendary. Obadiah pleads with Elijah not to disappear as he had done before.

*So he said, "**How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?**" 10 As the Lord your God lives, **there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you;** and when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you. 11 And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, "Elijah is here!"' 12 And it shall come to pass, **as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the Lord will carry you to a place I do not know;** so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. 1Kings 18:9-12*

Elijah promised Obadiah that he will remain and meet with Ahab.

Then Elijah said, "As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today." 16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. 1Kings 18:15-16

Ahab and Elijah Meet Again

At their first meeting Elijah had one sentence for Ahab and then he left.

*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.**" 1Kings 17:1*

Any hope that this had touched Ahab's heart is removed with his first words to Elijah. Which is essentially, this is all your fault. You are the one who has brought all this trouble on Israel. He had still not made the application that this was not from Elijah but from God.

This lie is first removed with Elijah's answer that it was Ahab and not himself who had brought all this trouble on Israel. It will be further removed with the request that first all Israel be gathered(invited) to witness the event God had planned. Then all the prophets of Baal and Asherah needed to be gathered together to participate in the event God wanted to occur.

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

18 And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baals. 19 Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." 1 Kings 18:17-19

Some see this event as the contest between Elijah and the 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah. Others see this as a contest between God and Baal and his wife Asherah. Both are true but the applications Elijah makes are between God and Baal.

The Contest on Mt Carmel

After everything is prepared exactly as Elijah specified, **all** the children of Israel and **all** the prophets have gathered on Mt Carmel. Elijah addresses them but they do not answer at the first. He strikes at the very heart of the problem. They were not fully committed to either God. They were limping between two sides. One side wanting to please Ahab and Jezebel, and enjoy the illicit fruits of idolatry. The other side a consciousness of the one true God and knowing in their hearts what they should be doing.

So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. 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. 1Kings 18:20-21

Then Elijah proposes the test or contest. He is one prophet of the Lord and the prophet of Baal has 450(although gathered there, the 400 prophets of Asherah are not mentioned). Two bulls will be brought and used for sacrifice. They get the first choice of the bull, then both will kill the bull and set the meat on wood to be accepted. The God who answered by fire would then be the true God. This time all the people respond.

Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. 23 Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. 24 Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." So all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken." 1 Kings 18:20-24

Things proceed exactly as Elijah had proclaimed and the prophets of Baal are allowed to go first. From morning until noon they call on the name of Baal and nothing happens.

So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. 1 Kings 18:26

Elijah then begins to mock and jeer at these prophets, trying to make the most out of their failure for the people to see. Maybe he was too busy, or meditating and unable to hear. Perhaps he is on a journey or asleep. Each of these is a mockery of their inability to get a response.

He rouses the prophets to greater efforts, cutting themselves until their own blood is gushing out of the wounds, but still nothing happened.

And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." 28 So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. 29 And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. 1Kings 18:27-29

After about three more hours, as the time of the evening sacrifice neared, Elijah took over. First, he got the attention of all the people by calling them over to witness what he was about to do. The altar that had been to God, but had been broken down was repaired and twelve stones were taken to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. After the altar was built Elijah took the time to dig a trench all the way around the altar. In the background the prophets of Baal are probably still trying, but all eyes are on Elijah.

Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. 31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the

number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." 32 Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. 1 Kings 18:30-32

Elijah then placed the wood on the altar, placed the pieces of the bull on the altar and then drenched the altar with water so no trickery could be later put forth as the reason this happened.

And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." 34 Then he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. 35 So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water. 1 Kings 18:33-35

At the moment of the evening sacrifice all is prepared and Elijah makes a simple prayer request of God.

And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. 37 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." 1 Kings 18:36-37

God answered in an act of great power and majesty. The wet wood, bull, and stones were all engulfed in fire. At this moment of triumph, Elijah uses it as the opportunity to execute all the prophets of Baal.

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!" 40 And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there. 1 Kings 18:38-40

The Drought Ends

Elijah then tells Ahab to rejoice because it would soon be raining and the drought ended. This too is directly tied to this contest. With all the prophets of Baal executed, there was no one to take credit for Baal.

Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain." 42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, 43 and said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." 1 Kings 18:41-43

Elijah knows God's will is for the rain to come. He also knows that it will be through his word that the rain will begin. He prays for rain, then has his servant go check to see if anything has happened. This occurs seven times (the number of completeness), then a small cloud is seen over the sea. This is enough for Elijah to know he has attained his purpose.

So he went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing." And seven times he said, "Go again." 44 Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, "There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea!" So he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.'" 1 Kings 18:43-44

Like Samson, the power of God worked on Elijah so he could run more quickly than Ahab's horses.

Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. 46 Then the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. 1 Kings 18:45-46

Jezebel's Threat

God doesn't give us much information, but Elijah had to feel some righteous indignation and a hope that maybe he had done something to change things. After the miraculous encounter, with all Israel as witness and the execution of the worst of the evil influence in Israel, perhaps Israel would return.

But whatever hopes he had were shattered when he heard the threat from the evil Jezebel that Elijah knew from her past in which she had killed all the prophets of God she could get her hands

on that, that she meant and would do all within her power to accomplish this.

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." 1 Kings 19:1-2

Her words contain a form of an oath to her gods. If I can't kill you like you killed them then let my gods do even more to me. As soon as Elijah heard these words he fled. Some have maligned Elijah for fleeing, but that was exactly what God had told him to do the first time.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 3 "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. 1 Kings 17:2-4

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. 1 Kings 19:3

As Gabriel spoke to Zacharias about the son Elizabeth would soon bear, he spoke of "the spirit and power of Elijah" which makes it impossible for us to see him as a coward or one who doesn't have enough faith to stand.

*But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and **your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son**, and you shall call his name John. ... 17 **He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah**, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." 18 And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years." 19 And the angel answered and said to him, "**I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.** Lk 1:13; 17-19*

What really happened is brought out in the following narrative. Elijah went from the thrill and excitement of victory to the realization it was an empty victory. He had accomplished nothing. He was fleeing out of discouragement and disillusionment. Nothing could be done and there was no point in doing it anymore. He drops off his servant in Beersheba and continues his travels into the wilderness.

That night, Elijah prays that he might die. Again, this can be interpreted in different ways that describe his character. It gets clearer as he repeats himself that it is simply resignation of the facts.

*But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "**It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!**" 1 Kings 19:4*

10 So he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." 1 Kings 19:10, 14

Elijah Goes to Mt Horeb

Elijah is discouraged. He thought he was going to be instrumental in changing Israel, but has come to see that it will never happen. His initial words do not fully convey his mind like the second. The angel brings him food because God had determined to allow Elijah to come to Mt Horeb, which was the place he first spoke to Moses out of the bush and later gave the law to Israel.

*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.** 1 Kings 19:5-8*

*Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and **came to Horeb, the mountain of God.** 2 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. 12 So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, **you shall serve God on this mountain.**" Ex 3:1-2 Ex 3:12*

Since in his own mind, there is nothing left to do, he has come to Mtg Horeb. Was it because this

is where Moses also spoke to the Lord? Was he told to go there, or did he choose it on his own. These are important questions to answer if we are to know all that is happening here, but they can't be answered so we must walk carefully.

At Mt Horeb Elijah found a cave and spent the night there. At some point, without warning, the word of the Lord came to him. It is important to note that not once is Elijah rebuked or chastened. Once again, he is only asked why he has come. As noted above, his reasons have deepened as the trip proceeded.

And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 So he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." 1Kings 19:9-10

Elijah Spoke to God

The Word of the Lord then told Elijah to go out of the cave and stand out on the mountain before the Lord. The similarities between this event and that of Moses are important.

*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; 12 and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. 13 So it was, when Elijah heard it, that **he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave**. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 1 Kings 19:11-13*

So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. 23 Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen." Ex 33:22-23

*Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. 6 **And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed**, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." Ex 34:5-7*

There are several similarities. They are on the same mountain. In both cases the Lord passed by. In both cases, God spoke. There are also some differences. For Elijah, there were four events to introduce the Lord Himself to Elijah.

1. A great and strong wind that broke rocks.
2. An Earthquake
3. A Fire
4. A still small voice.

The Lord's presence was not in the first three, but in the fourth. Something must have been different because Elijah responded differently. The first three were also present before God gave the ten commandments.

*Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were **thunderings and lightnings**, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was **completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire**. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and **the whole mountain quaked greatly**. Ex 19:16-19*

*For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that **burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest**, 19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. Heb 12:18-20*

The still small voice said something, but what it was is not revealed, but it warned Elijah that something was different. By covering his face, he manifested his respect and fear of the Lord. He knew something very special had just happened.

God gave Elijah a new Task

He answered the question exactly the same way he did to the "Word of the Lord." But this time, God gave him new instructions.

So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 And he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

*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**. 16 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. 17 It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. 1Kings 19:13-17

Elijah is to return back to complete his work. It appears these words were designed to comfort Elijah. While Elijah did anoint Elisha, and both Jehu and Hazael took great vengeance for God over Israel, Elijah only lived to see the first. Elisha did the other two.

1. Anoint Hazael as king of Syria (2Kings 8:13).
2. Anoint Jehu to destroy Ahab(2Kings 9:1-10)
3. Anoint Elisha to replace him.

Again, it appears these words are given to comfort Elijah, all three of those who were soon to come to power would complete the mission of Elijah. Then God revealed an important fact that Elijah was unaware of and had completely skewed his thinking. He was not alone. There were many others.

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

No matter how scattered they were, He who numbers the very hairs of our head knows who they are and were they are.

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2Tim 2:19

Elijah Calls Elisha

Much is left out of this account. How did Elisha know that it was Elijah who placed his mantle(cloak of sheepskin or goatskin?) on him? When he asked to kiss his father and mother was it a rebuke? Did he go back and say goodbye? Why did he slaughter two of the 24 oxen who were plowing and give it to the people?

So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. 20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" 21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant. 1 Kings 19:19-21

The mantle of Elijah is a word used in several different ways. It is first used of Esau who was like a "hairy garment." Then of the Babylonian garment that tempted Achan. Then several times of Elijah who "wrapped his face in a mantle" on Mt Horeb. Then took it to strike the waters and they were divided. Later after Elijah went to heaven in a whirlwind, Elisha found his mantle and also used it to divide the waters. It appears to be something of coarse hair, maybe the leather hide of an animal that was not shaved to remove the hair.

"And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive. Zech 13:4

Then he said to them, "What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?" 8 So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite." 2 Kings 1:7-8

Elijah's Final Works

After Elijah called Elisha, his main work was done. Although the historical narrative continues, Elijah is only mentioned three more times. Elijah:

- 1 Rebuked Ahab for events leading to the death of Naboth for his vineyard(1Kings 21:17-29).
- 2 Condemned Ahab's son Ahaziah, for sending to Baal-Zebub the God of Ekron, instead of inquiring of the God of Israel(2Kings 1:3-17).
- 3 Was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot (2Kings 2).

Of the three things God had told Elijah he would do after Mt Horeb, the only one he did himself was to anoint Elisha. Then through Elisha, Hazael was told he would be king of Syria(2Kings 8:13), then, through the words of Elisha, one of the sons of the prophets was sent to anoint Jehu as King(2Kings 9:1-10).

Ahab's Final Years

The end of Ahab's life is briefly recorded after Elisha became a prophet. First, there is a war with Syria that began when Ben-Hadad arrived in Samaria with thirty two kings and multitudes of soldiers. His first request was for all the silver and gold that Ahab possessed along with Ahab's most beautiful wives and children. Ahab quickly agreed to this request, but Ben-Hadad wanted more. He wanted his servants to pass through Samaria and take everything that was considered valuable, not only from Ahab, but from everyone else.

Then the messengers came back and said, "Thus speaks Ben-Hadad, saying, 'Indeed I have sent to

you, saying, "You shall deliver to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your children"; 6 but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants. And it shall be, that whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they will put it in their hands and take it." 1Kings 20:5-6

Ahab and the elders decide to stand up against the king

And all the elders and all the people said to him, "Do not listen or consent." 9 Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, "Tell my lord the king, 'All that you sent for to your servant the first time I will do, but this thing I cannot do.'" 1Kings 20:8-9

At that moment, God intervened and promised a victory to them. This was an act of grace designed to bring the people back to him. Yet God used neither Elijah or Elisha, but an unknown prophet.

Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, "Thus says the Lord: 'Have you seen all this great multitude?' Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the Lord." 1 Kings 20:13

After a great victory, Ben-Hadad was counseled that the God of Israel was a God of the hills and not of the plain. If he returned and fought in the plain, he would be victorious. Because of this foolish blasphemy, God again promised Ahab a victory.

Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, "Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than they." 1 Kings 20:23

Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, "Thus says the Lord: 'Because the Syrians have said, "The Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys," therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord. 1Kings 20:28

After the battle, Ahab foolishly made a covenant with the man God had delivered into his hand for destruction. God sent a prophet to condemn Ahab for this decision. Ahab was very unhappy.

Then he said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'" 43 So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria. 20:42-43

Naboth's Vineyard

Another clear insight into the character of both Ahab and Jezebel is revealed in this account. It begins with Ahab's request to purchase a vineyard owned by a man named Naboth. Since it was close to his own home Ahab proposed a swap, but Naboth held fast to his right to keep the vineyard given by lot to his fathers at the time of Joshua. Naboth might have saved his life if he had done what Moses had provided for in the Law, but perhaps Naboth had no confidence that once out of his possession, the Law of Moses would have been honored.

'The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me. 24 And in all the land of your possession you shall grant redemption of the land. ... 28 But if he is not able to have it restored to himself, then what was sold shall remain in the hand of him who bought it until the Year of Jubilee; and in the Jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his possession. Lev 25:23- 24 28

After Naboth's refusal, Ahab becomes sullen, angry and refuses to eat or even talk.

So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. 1 Kings 21:4-5

Jezebel promised to get the vineyard for Ahab, then devised a wicked and devious plan to murder Naboth and take his vineyard. Using Ahab's seal, she demanded the city set up false witnesses, accuse and convict Naboth of blasphemy and then take him out and stone him. They followed the letter and after Naboth was dead, Jezebel told Ahab he could have the vineyard, because of that death. Ahab doesn't ask how he died(probably because he knew from past experience).

In their last meeting together, God had sent Elijah to condemn Ahab.

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 "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. 19 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.'" 1Kings 21:17-19

Once again, Ahab blames all his problems on Elijah, calling him an enemy. But Elijah sets the record straight by telling him why God was going to do to his house what he had done to Jeroboam.

And he answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord: 21 'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. 22 I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin.' 23 And concerning Jezebel the Lord also spoke, saying,

'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' 24 The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field." 1Kings 21:20-24

Though Wicked God was Moved by Ahab's Repentance

We read many times of God's mercy and compassion. How forgiving He is whenever He sees remorse, repentance, and humility. Few cases are more stark than the wickedness of Ahab and God's desire to show mercy to him because of his act of humility.

But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up. 26 And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. 27 So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. 28 And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house." 1Kings 21:25-29

Ahab's Death

Three years after this event, Ahab requests Jehoshaphat's help in restoring the city of Ramoth Gilead from Syria. Although Jehoshaphat agreed to go, he placed a condition regarding asking for God's guidance. Although Ahab produces 400 "prophets" who proclaim victory, Jehoshaphat wants a true prophet of the Lord, Ahab is aware of one, but again assumes he is hated by him because of the rebukes due to his evil.

Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the Lord today." 6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?" So they said, "Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king." 7 And Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not still a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of Him?" 8 So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!" 1Kings 22:5-8

Micaiah is called for and warned to give a good report of the coming battle. Micaiah is more concerned about God's truth and says so. He faces a false prophet with an elaborate scheme to convince Ahab and Jehoshaphat. His first prophesy must have been spoken in derision since Ahab asked for the truth. Micaiah's true prophesy is Ahab's death.

Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?" And he answered him, "Go and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king!" 16 So the king said to him, "How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?" 17 Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'" 1 Kings 22:15-17

Ahab is very displeased and manifested no faith at all. Instead he chose to put Micaiah into prison and to remain there until his return. He left with Micaiah's final words.

So the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; 27 and say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace."'" 28 But Micaiah said, "If you ever return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me." And he said, "Take heed, all you people!" 1 Kings 22:26-28

Ahab seeks to thwart this prophesy by disguising himself, but God still found a means to bring about His prophesy.

34 Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the 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." ... 37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. 38 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. 1Kings 22:34, 37-38

After his death, his son Ahaziah reigned, but died two years later.

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. 1 Kings 22:51-52

Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years 2 Kings 3:1

Ahaziah meets Elijah

In a blatant act of idolatry, Ahaziah sends servants to Ekron for the help of the God Baal-Zebub (the lord of a fly). Elijah intercepts the message and sends the servants back with a strong rebuke.

But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, 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?' 4 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." So Elijah departed. 2Kings 1:3-4

Ahaziah seeks to capture Elijah, sending out captains of 50 men to take him. Twice the Lord put those sent out to death. The third man pleads with Elijah to spare his life and the Angel of the Lord bids Elijah to go with him.

Again, he sent a third captain of fifty with his fifty men. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and pleaded with him, and said to him: "Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. 14 Look, fire has come down from heaven and burned up the first two captains of fifties with their fifties. But let my life now be precious in your sight." 15 And the angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." 2 Kings 1:13-15

Elijah returned with this captain and told Ahaziah he would not leave his bed alive.

The last event in Elijah's life is so closely tied to the beginning of Elisha's work that we will cover them together.