

## Elijah

**Scripture: 1 Kings 17-22, 2 Kings 1-2**

**Time Period: During the northern and southern kingdoms**

### The story of Elijah

Elijah lived about 800 yrs before Jesus. Elijah's story begins with a controversy with Ahab, the King of Israel. Ahab was an evil King in the sight of God and he let the Queen worship and serve false gods. One day Elijah came to Ahab and said, "As surely as God lives, the God of Israel before whom I stand in obedient service, the next years are going to see a total drought—not a drop of dew or rain unless I say so."

God then told Elijah, "Get out of here, and fast. Head east and hide out at the canyon on the other side of the Jordan River. You can drink fresh water from the brook; I've ordered the ravens to feed you."

Elijah obeyed God's orders. He went and camped in the canyon on the other side of the Jordan. And sure enough, ravens brought him his meals, both breakfast and supper, and he drank from the brook.

Eventually the brook dried up because of the drought. Then God spoke to him: "Get up and go to Zarephath and live there. I've instructed a woman who lives there, a widow, to feed you."

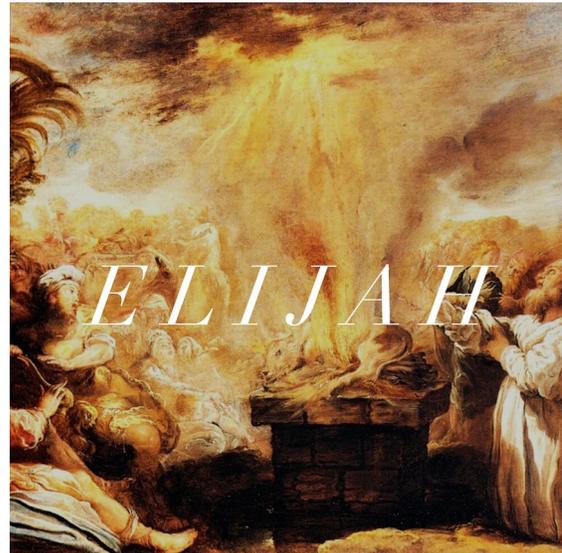
Elijah obeyed God's orders. As he came to the entrance of the village he met a woman, a widow, gathering firewood. He asked her, "Please, would you bring me a little water in a jug? I need a drink." As she went to get it, he called out, "And while you're at it, would you bring me something to eat?"

She said, "I swear, as surely as your God lives, I don't have so much as a biscuit. I have a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a bottle; you found me scratching together just enough firewood to make a last meal for my son and me. After we eat it, we'll die."

Elijah said to her, "Don't worry about a thing. Go ahead and do what you've said. But first make a small biscuit for me and bring it back here. Then go ahead and make a meal from what's left for you and your son. This is the word of the God of Israel: 'The jar of flour will not run out and the bottle of oil will not become empty before God sends rain on the land and ends this drought.'"

And she went right off and did it, did just as Elijah asked. And it turned out as he said—daily food for her and her family. The jar of meal didn't run out and the bottle of oil didn't become empty: God's promise fulfilled to the letter, exactly as Elijah had delivered it!

Later on the woman's son became sick. The sickness took a turn for the worse—and then he stopped breathing.



The woman said to Elijah, “Why did you ever show up here in the first place—a holy man barging in, exposing my sins, and killing my son?”

Elijah said, “Hand me your son.”

He then took him from her bosom, carried him up to the loft where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. Then he prayed, “O God, my God, why have you brought this terrible thing on this widow who has opened her home to me? Why have you killed her son?”

Three times he stretched himself out full-length on the boy, praying with all his might, “God, my God, put breath back into this boy’s body!” God listened to Elijah’s prayer and put breath back into his body—he was alive! Elijah picked the boy up, carried him downstairs from the loft, and gave him to his mother. “Here’s your son,” said Elijah, “alive!”

The woman said to Elijah, “I see it all now—you are a holy man. When you speak, God speaks—a true word!”

Now it had been 3 years since Elijah had spoken the word of the Lord to King Ahab about the drought that God had sent to the land. God spoke to Elijah again and told him, “go show yourself to King Ahab, and I will send rain to the earth.”

The moment King Ahab saw Elijah he said, “So it’s you, old troublemaker!”

“It’s not I who has caused trouble in Israel,” said Elijah, “but you and your government—you’ve dumped God’s ways and commands and run off after the local gods, the Baals. Here’s what I want you to do: Assemble everyone in Israel at Mount Carmel. And make sure that the friends of Jezebel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of the local gods, the Baals, and the four hundred prophets of the whore goddess Asherah, are there.”

So Ahab summoned everyone in Israel, particularly the prophets, to Mount Carmel.

Elijah challenged the people: “How long are you going to sit on the fence? If God is the real God, follow him; if it’s Baal, follow him. Make up your minds!”

Nobody said a word; nobody made a move.

Then Elijah said, “I’m the only prophet of God left in Israel; and there are 450 prophets of Baal. Let the Baal prophets bring up two oxen; let them pick one, butcher it, and lay it out on an altar on firewood—but don’t ignite it. I’ll take the other ox, cut it up, and lay it on the wood. But neither will I light the fire. Then you pray to your gods and I’ll pray to God. The god who answers with fire will prove to be, in fact, God.”

The prophets of Baal went first and they took the ox he had given them, prepared it for the altar, then prayed to Baal. They prayed all morning long, “O Baal, answer us!” But nothing happened—not so much as a breeze. Desperate, they jumped and stomped on the altar they had made.

By noon, Elijah had started making fun of them, taunting, “Call a little louder—he is a god, after all. Maybe he’s off meditating somewhere or other, or maybe he is going to the bathroom, or maybe he’s on vacation. You don’t suppose he’s overslept, do you, and needs to be woke up?” They prayed louder and louder, cutting themselves with swords and knives—a ritual common to them—until they were covered with blood.

Then Elijah told the people, “Enough of that—it’s my turn. Gather around.” Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel and he built the stones into the altar in honor of God. Then Elijah dug a fairly wide trench around the altar. He laid firewood on the altar, cut up the ox,

put it on the wood, and said, "Fill four buckets with water and drench both the ox and the firewood." Then he said, "Do it again," and they did it. Then he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. The altar was drenched and the trench was filled with water.

Elijah the prophet prayed, "O God, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, make it known right now that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I'm doing what I'm doing under your orders. Answer me, God; O answer me and reveal to this people that you are God, the true God, and that you are giving these people another chance at repentance."

Immediately the fire of God fell and burned up the offering, the wood, the stones, the dirt, and even the water in the trench.

All the people saw it happen and fell on their faces in worship, exclaiming, "God is the true God! God is the true God!"

Elijah told them, "Grab the Baal prophets! Don't let one get away!"

They grabbed them and Elijah had them taken down the mountain and all put to death. Elijah said to Ahab, "Up on your feet! Eat and drink—celebrate! Rain is on the way; I hear it coming." Elijah climbed to the top of mount Carmel and prayed to God asking for rain. God stayed true to his word and caused it to rain, once again proving that He was the only true God.

There is much more to Elijah's story, in fact the very next scene we see Elijah running in fear for his life from queen Jezebel who was enraged at the slaughter of her false prophets and she was now out to kill Elijah. But God did not allow death to come to Elijah. He was faithful to Elijah even when Elijah did not trust, and in the end Elijah was taken to heaven by God in a whirlwind having called the people of Israel back to worshipping the one true God of heaven and earth.