

4/3/11

**Elijah The Unforgettable Prophet**  
**1Kings 17:1-24**

The northern Kingdom has now reached its lowest point in idolatry, going from the calf worship of Jeroboam to Baal worship that has permeated the land, replacing the worship of Yahweh.

So God raised up and sent Elijah to denounce and defeat the false religion, being one of the most colorful and unforgettable men of the Bible.

1. He called fire down from heaven.
2. He killed the prophets of Baal.
3. He stood up to Ahab.
4. He ran away from Jezebel.
5. He never died, being taken to heaven.
6. He is one of two witnesses in the tribulation.

We want to look at Elijah who is called by God to proclaim judgment to Ahab, which presents him through a three-fold lens: 1Kings 17:1-24

- I. Elijah, the man for the hour. vs. 1
- II. Elijah, the man in training. vs. 2-16
- III. Elijah, the man of faith. vs. 17-24

**I. Elijah, the man of the hour. vs. 1**

- A. The man Elijah appears out of nowhere and without warning. 1Kings 17:1

1. He is identified as “Elijah the Tishbite.” vs. 1a
  - a. Elijah means “My father is Yahweh”, appearing 60 times in 1-2 Kings.
  - b. The name Tishbite “Tishbiy” means captivity and its location is uncertain.
  - c. “Elijah the Tishbite” only 6 times in First and Second Kings. 1Kings 17:1; 21:17, 28; 2Kings 1:3, 8, 9:36
2. He is also indicated to be of the inhabitants of Gilead. vs. 1b
  - a. The word rendered “inhabitants”, is in the original is the same as that rendered “Tishbite”, so the verse may be read as in the LXX, “Elijah the Tishbite of Tishbi in Gilead”. (Easton)
    - 1) Some interpret this word to mean “stranger or sojourner” and read the verse, “Elijah the stranger from among the strangers in Gilead”.
    - 2) This designation is believed to denote Tishbi to be his birthplace, a place in Upper Galilee (mentioned in the apocryphal book of Tobit), from which for some reason he migrated into Gilead. (Easton)
    - 3) Josephus, the Jewish historian supposes Tishbi was some place in the land of Gilead. Ant. 8:13, 2
  - b. The region of Gilead remember belonged partly to the Reuben and

Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh on the east side of the Jordan, where this prophet dwelt.

\* They were the first to go into captivity into Assyria!

3. He appears on the scene much like Melchizedek.
  - a. Without Father or mother.
  - b. Without beginning of days or lineage.
- B. The man Elijah appeared as the prophet of God.
  1. The prophet Elijah proclaimed the judgment of God directly to Ahab probably at Samaria. vs. 1c
    - a. “Ahab was the most wicked king to this time, he did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. Ahab did not consider the gravity of walking in the sins of Jeroboam’s, but rather as a light thing and sinned worse by taking to himself a wife named Jezebel and set up alters of Baal, in the temple of Baal which he had building Samaria.” 1Kings 16:30-32
    - b. “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.” 1kings 21:25
  2. The proclamation was due to the false worship of Baal in the land. vs. 1d-g

- a. The authority behind the proclamation of judgment was supreme over all kings, the God of Israel. vs. 1d
  - 1) Elijah announced the certainty of the judgment by an oath to the God who sent him to declare it, “As the LORD God of Israel lives.”
  - 2) The LORD “Yahweh”, the existing One, “I Am that I Am”, who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.
  - 3) The God of Israel by covenant, who is eternal and alive, not dead.
- b. The truthfulness of the message was indicated by the phrase, “before whom I stand”. vs. 1e
  - 1) Elijah was aware of his accountability to God.
  - 2) Yahweh was bearing witness to the faithful obedience of Elijah to declare the judgment to come.
- c. The nature of the judgment was against to god Baal, “There shall not be dew nor rain these years.” vs. 1f
  - 1) The introduction of Baal worship by Ahab and Jezebel had permeated the country.
  - 2) Baal was the Phoenician god of the storm, believed to control the rain.
  - 3) The judgment was a direct challenge to Baal by Yahweh that would culminate in the defeat of

- the prophets of Baal, on Mount Carmel.
- 4) This would begin the revealing that Yahweh is the only God and no one can withstand Him!
- d. The agent for the duration of the prophecy would be the prophet Elijah, “except at my word.” vs. 1g
- 1) This was punishment for their apostasy, “And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.” Lev. 26:18-20
  - 2) “Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD’S anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.” Deut. 11:16-17

- 3) The crisis of the day gave the opportunity for a man to stand in the gap for God.
  - 4) There would be no rain for 3 1/2 years as a sign of God’s judgment.
- C. The prophet Elijah was a man hard to miss.
1. He was a rugged outdoors kind of person, “A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.” 2Kings 1:8a
    - a. Some believe the reference to being “hairy man”, was to the camel hair of his garment, but without doubt it refers to his body.
    - b. Others think it means he had very long hair and a long beard.
    - c. The ancient prophets all wore rough garments, or upper coats made of the skins of beasts: They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, according to Hebrews. Heb. 11:37
    - d. “And John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.” Matt. 3:4
  2. He wore a leather belt or girdle.
    - a. The common girdle was made of leather. 2Kings 1:8, Matt. 3:4
    - b. There was a finer sort of linen. Jer 13:1, Ezk. 16:10, Dan. 10:5

- c. Girdles of sackcloth were worn in token of sorrow. Is. 3:24, 22:12
- d. They were variously fastened to the wearer. Mk. 1:6 Jer 13:1 Ezk. 16:10
- e. The girdle was a symbol of strength and power. Job 12:18, 21 30:11 Is. 22:21 45:5
- f. “Righteousness and faithfulness” are the girdle of the Messiah. Is. 11:5
- g. Girdles were used as purses or pockets, “purses” R.V., margin, “girdles”. Matt. 10:9 A.V, Mk. 6:8

### Illustration

God raised up Zwingli and many others to prepare the Protestant Reformation through the man of the hour, Martin Luther.

### Application

1. The history of Israel is marked by God sending his prophets to warn His people from their treacherous apostasy against God.
  - a. Isaiah the prophet was sent by God to pronounce judgment, being cleanse and sent after his heavenly vision. Is. 6
  - b. Jeremiah was but a young man, in his teens, when God set him as a prophet to the nations. Jer. 1:4-5
  - c. The prophet Ezekiel was trained to be a priest, but God called him to be the prophet

- to the captivity in Babylon, through a vision of the throne of God. Ezk. 1-2
2. In the early church God raised up faithful men to speak the word of God, against false teaching.
    - a. The apostles against the Sanhedrin, telling them they must obey God in preaching the Gospel and the name of Jesus, rather than man. Acts 5:29
    - b. Stephen opposed the men of the synagogue of the Freedmen at the cost of his life, as they stoned him to death. Acts 7
    - c. Paul apposed all those who corrupted the gospel and defame the name of Jesus Christ, warning them of the judgment to come.
      - \* “And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.” Acts 24:24-25
    - d. God is continually raising people up to stand against the false teachings of the day.
      - 1) “Now the **Spirit** expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” 1Tim. 4:1
      - 2) “But there were also **false** prophets among the people, even as there will be

**false teachers** among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.” 2Pet. 2:1

3. The prophet Elijah will come as one of the witnesses against the Anti-christ.
  - a. “Behold, I will send you **Elijah** the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” Mal. 4:5
  - b. The people asked John the Baptist if he was Elijah, he said no, but a voice in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Messiah. Jn. 1:21-23
  - c. But Jesus said John fulfilled the short-term prophecy of Elijah, in the spirit and power of Elijah. Matt. 11:14, Lk. 1:17
  - d. Elijah and Enoch will prophecy judgment and repentance dressed in sackcloth, being able to bring down fire from heaven the first 3 1/2 years and the will be killed by the anti-christ, then after 3 1/2 days they will rise before all and ascend to heaven. Rev. 11

*Elijah was the man of the hour!*

## II. Elijah, the man in training. vs. 2-16

- A. Elijah was sent by God to the Brook Cherith. vs. 2-4

1. The word of the Lord came to Elijah. vs. 2
  - a. The phrase is common throughout the Scriptures for the revelation of God to an individual.
  - b. Six time is appears in the chapter. vs. 1, 2, 5, 8, 16, 24
2. The prophet Elijah was given his next instructions. vs. 3
  - \* “Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan.”
  - a. Elijah didn’t go on his own, but eastward as God directed him. vs. 3a
    - 1) The direction confirmed Elijah was in Samaria, having declared the prophetic judgment to Ahab.
    - 2) Samaria, the capital of Ahab.
  - b. Elijah was given the purpose behind the instructions, to hide. vs. 3b
    - 1) The word “cathar”, means in order to conceal himself, carefully is the idea behind the word.
    - 2) The judgment against Ahab and his false god, would put him on the number one list of wanted men.
      - \* The man Obadiah said to Elijah, “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." 1Kings 18:10

- c. Elijah was to go to a specific area of the Brook Cherith. vs. 3b-c
  - 1) The name Cherith K@riyth means cutting.
  - 2) The Brook Cherith was about 5 miles north, from the north end of the Dead Sea, about 15 miles the city of Jericho.
  - 3) The prophet was to hide by the Brook which flowed into the Jordan River, at the juncture.
- 3. The prophet was told by God that He would provide for him during the time of drought. vs. 4
  - a. Elijah would drink from the brook. vs. 4a
  - b. Elijah would be fed by the ravens. vs. 4b
    - 1) God said, "I have commanded the ravens".
    - 2) The period of time marked the intervention of God to sustain his faithful and to give witness of His existence, such as the Exodus and the wilderness journey.

**B.** Elijah went in full obedience in faith. vs. 5-7

- 1. Elijah did according to the word of the Lord. vs. 5a
  - a. He did not waiver.
  - b. He did not add or take away from the word of God.
    - \* He did not lean to his own understanding. Prov. 3:5-7
- 2. Elijah went and stayed exactly by the Brook Cherith, which flowed by the Jordan. vs. 5b-c
  - a. Believing and trusting God to conceal him from Ahab.
  - b. Believing and trusting God to provide for him, as the land would languish.
- 3. Elijah witnessed the faithfulness and power of God. vs. 6
  - a. He did not lack a meal, God's agents were right on time, "The ravens brought Elijah bread and meat in the morning and evening." vs. 6a-b
  - b. He did not go thirsty, "He drank from the brook." vs. 6c
- 4. Elijah was tested through faith. vs. 7
  - a. The brook dried up after a while. vs. 7a
  - b. The reason was that there had been no rain. vs. 7b
    - 1) Elijah was trusting in God though things began to look grim.
    - 2) Elijah had not heard the voice of God anew, he had to depend on

what God had said to him, He was going to provide for him.

- 3) Elijah was alone and cut off from all men, dependent on God alone.

**C. Elijah was sent by God to a widow at Zarephath. vs. 8-16**

1. The voice of the Lord came right on time and redirected him. vs. 8-9
  - a. God was not late, “Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying.” vs. 8
    - 1) God was in full control.
    - 2) Elijah was learning to discern the voice of God.
  - b. God knew the safest place for Elijah, “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.” vs. 9
    - 1) Zarephath was 6 miles south of Sidon, situated between Tyre and Sidon, modern day Lebanon.
    - 2) This was the pagan area of Phoenicia from which Jezebel came from, a reminder of God’s ability to provide and protect His own, in land of the enemy. vs. 9b
    - 3) The prophet would have to travel way up to the north, to the shores of the Mediterranean, 115 miles, crows flight.

- 3) He was to dwell there, for God would now provide for him there.
  - \* “See, I have commanded a widow to provide for you”, just like the ravens vs. 9e-f

2. The prophet Elijah once again went in full obedience to Zarephath. vs. 10-12
  - a. The arrival brought Elijah in contact with the very widow. vs. 10-11
    - 1) He left Cherith and came to the gate of the city and a woman was gathering sticks. vs. 10a-c
    - 2) He called to her and said, “Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink.” vs. 10d-f
    - 3) He also asked her to bring a morsel of bread, as she was on her way for the water. vs. 11
  - b. The response of the widow revealed her condition was most pitiful. vs. 12
    - 1) The widow declared the truthfulness of her statement by declaring, “As the LORD your God lives,” vs. 12a-b
      - \* Not that she knew God, but probably recognized Elijah as a Jew and God had prepared her heart.
    - 2) The widow confessed she had not bread, only had a handful of flour

- in a bin and a little oil in a jar.” vs. 12c-e
- 3) The widow declared her hopeless condition by going to gather sticks, prepare the last meal for her son and herself, then die.” vs. 12f-i
    - \* The words of the widow did not match the words God told Elijah, yet he was to have faith in God and sympathy towards the widow.
  - 4) The drought had already taken its toll, there was famine on the land!
3. The prophet Elijah was to awaken faith in the widow to bring about the word God had promised. vs. 13-16
- a. He encouraged her compassionately, “And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son.” vs. 13
    - 1) Others first.
    - 2) Then yourself.
  - b. He promised her that God would provide for 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.’” vs. 14

- 1) This would reveal God to the heathen woman and her son.
    - \* Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician women. Matt. 15:21-28
  - 2) This would continue to mature Elijah’s faith in preparation for Carmel.
- c. He saw her obedience in faith and witnessed God to be true to His word. vs. 15-16
- 1) The widow obey, “She, he and her son ate for many days”, such faith was not found in Israel. vs. 15
  - 2) The widow was provided for by God, the flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry”, as God had spoken by Elijah, revealing to her the Living God. vs. 16
  - 3) This was also a sharp rebuke to the people of God, for the extent of unbelief and apostasy in Israel, Jesus declared it in the synagogue at Nazareth, as he was sent to a Gentile. Lk. 4:25-26
    - \* “Then He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. 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; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.”

### **Illustration**

The Lord Jesus spent 3 1/2 years the disciples training them for a life-time of ministry. Jesus taught Paul in the Arabian desert for three years, training and preparing him for his ministry.

### **Application**

**1.** God Christian is in training and we never finish until we are in heaven.

- a.** You are in training as a single Christian for your future wife of husband and family.
  - b.** You are in training as a husband or wife, to model Christ to the world and follow God’s will for your family.
  - c.** Your are in training where you work to be an example of a hard, honest worker.
  - d.** You are in training in the church as you grow and are used to point other to Christ.
- \* “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” Col. 1:9-12

**2.** The only way to discern the voice of God is to know the word of God and spend time with God.

- a.** Seeking His will.
- b.** Seeking His direction.
- d.** Seeking His call.
- e.** Nehemiah, though he was in captivity, believed God could speak to him, use him and open doors for him.

\* “O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.” For I was the king’s cupbearer.” Neh. 1:11

**3.** God has always prepared his servants and the evidence of their doing only what God tells them , will be proven through their lives.

- a.** When I just was born again God isolated me to a 10 hour a day job, filing impeller, at Johnston Pump in Glendora.
- b.** I heard Pastor Chuck’s tapes from Genesis to Revelation, ten chapter per tape, for those ten hours, as I stood in the same spot.

- c. God was preparing me and training my ear to hear His voice, at the end of one year I went into the ministry, in 1976.
- d. After about 4 years of being on staff at C.C. West Covina, God called me out in 1980 to Alhambra to start a Bible study, at the house of George and Rita Gutierrez, on Hidalgo St.
- e. God started a church and He guided us from place to place, providing all the finances for 6 1/2 years, doing only what God directed us to do.
- f. Then in 1986 God led us to Pasadena to purchase this building and we have been so privileged to see God work in the lives of so many people.
- g. God has always been faithful to bring people, remove people, open doors, provide the finances, without ever begging or pressuring anyone.
  - \* Paul told the Corinthians, “We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us--a sphere which especially includes you.” 2Cor. 10:13

*Elijah was the man in training!*

### III. Elijah, the man of faith. vs. 17-24

- A. Elijah was charge by the widow for the death of her son. vs. 17-18

- 1. The son of the widow became sick and died. vs. 17-18
  - a. The measure of time is not given, only that it was after the miraculous provisions by God.
    - \* But it must have been in the third years of drought, since the next chapter opens up in the third year, and contains the fulfillment of rain on the sixth months. 1Kings. 18:1
  - b. The son of the widow became severely sick and died, “there was no breath in him left.”
- 2. The words of the widow are recorded, “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?” vs. 18
  - a. She recognized her sinfulness.
  - b. She instantly related the death of her son to her sins of the past.
  - c. She also related it to God’s punishment of her sin.
    - 1) Guilt will do that, due to unconfessed sin.
    - 2) The law of reaping and sowing was acknowledged by the woman.

- B. Elijah was wise enough to seek God. vs. 19-22

1. The prophet ordered her, “Give me your son” and took him carried him to the upper room, where he stayed and laid him on his own bed. vs. 19
  - a. Elijah is as shocked as the woman.
  - b. Elijah resorted to his training, to go to God.
2. The prophet Elijah could only depend upon God. vs. 20
  - a. Elijah came to God based on a personal relation, “Then he cried out and said, “O LORD **my God.**” vs. 21a-b
    - 1) The cry is one of helplessness.
    - 2) The cry is of desperation.
  - b. Elijah revealed his humanity, a man of like sinful passions, frail and imperfect, “have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?” vs. 20d-e
    - 1) Regardless of who we are, when our emotions run high or low, they affect our perspective.
    - 2) Elijah will be would be scorned, persecuted and become fearful of Jezebel, running away in despair, desiring God to take his life.
3. The prophet Elijah stepped out in faith and the child revived. vs. 21-22
  - a. Elijah, “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.” vs. 21

- 1) He prayed in faith.
- 2) He prayed out of compassion.
- 3) He prayed not knowing, if God would answer or not.

\* Elisha and Paul did the same.

2Kings 4:34, Acts 20:10

- b. Elijah’s prayer was heard and answered, “Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived.” vs. 22
  - 1) No reason or explanation is given for the death of the son, but there is to be no doubt the child was dead, it says he revived.
  - 2) Life has many tragedies and heart aches that are painful and at times unexplainable, but normal to this fallen world or by the hand of God
  - 3) Rather than trying to figure all things out, we are just to commend ourselves to God and petition Him for his help.

C. Elijah was acknowledge as a man of God. vs. 23-24

1. The prophet Elijah presented the revived son to the widow. vs. 23

- a. The prophet Elijah personally presented the live child to the mother, “And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother.” vs. 23a-b
  - 1) The training of Elijah’s faith at the beginning had been the foundation for this test.
  - 2) The training of Elijah’s faith had grown and would continue to grow.
- b. The words of Elijah were simple and unpretentious, “And Elijah said, “See, your son lives!” vs. 23c-e
  - 1) Elijah knew he was the mere instrument.
  - 2) Elijah did not want to have the woman look to him, but God.
    - \* 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.” Ja. 5:17
- 2. The woman proclaimed her faith in God. vs. 24
  - a. She acknowledged the instrument, “Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now by this I know that you are a man of God.” vs. 24a-b

- 1) Too often people have a difficult time distinguishing the work of God from the man God uses, resulting in man worship!
- 2) At other times men forget, they are mere instruments being used, not the one bringing about the results.
- b. She acknowledged her faith in God’s word, “and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth.” vs. 24c
  - 1) She went from saying, “your God”, to acknowledging Elijah was a man of God, ending up knowing he was a man of God and the word of Yahweh was true. vs. 12, 20, 24
  - 2) As God was judging the idolatrous pagans, He was at the same time reaching out to those with an open heart, as in every generation!

### Illustration

Drink water out of a glass that has tainted the content, one quickly spits it out.

### Application

- 1. God will present to each of us many challenges throughout our lives.
  - a. There will be serious illnesses we will have to seek the Lord for and depend on Him.

- b. There will be serious problems in our marriages that we will have plead with God for and be obedient to Him.
  - c. There will be critical decisions in life, spiritual, financial, education and practical, so we want to train our ear to hear God,
    - \* “For the **eyes** of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.” 1Pet. 3:12
2. We must endeavor to never take the glory of God and ascribe it to ourselves.
- a. I am to be faithful to do my part, as God has called and gifted me for the edification of the body. Rom. 12, 1Cor. 12-14, Eph. 4:8-16
  - b. I am to believe the promises and potential of God, but never presume upon it, as if they apply at all times. Eph. 3:20-21
    - \* “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”
  - c. We are to be people of faith in God and His word.
    - a. “For we **walk** by **faith**, not by sight.” 2Cor. 5:7
    - b. “Now **faith** is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Heb. 11:1

- c. “But without **faith** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Heb. 11:6

### *Elijah was the man of faith!*

#### **Conclusion**

Elijah was called by God to proclaim judgment to Ahab, presenting him through a three-fold lens:

- I. Elijah, the man for the hour!
- II. Elijah, the man in training!
- III. Elijah, the man of faith!