

BIOGRAPHY OF ELIJAH

1 Kings 17-19
2 Kings 2 :1-19

My name is Elijah which means 'my God is Jehovah', I was a prophet during the reign of Ahab and his evil queen Jezebel in 900 BC.

God sent me to king Ahab to tell him that because of the evil things he had done there would be a drought for 3 years. I left him and God sent me to live beside the stream Cherith, which gave me water and He sent ravens to bring me bread and meat every morning and every evening, until the stream went dry. Once again God sent me on a journey outside Israel to Zarephath where I met a widow gathering sticks near the town gate. I asked her for a drink and bread. She then told me she was alone with her son, and was preparing to cook her last meal and then they would die as she had nothing else left. I told her not to be afraid, but to cook me a cake first and that after that her jars of oil and flour would never run out until the rains came again. And that is exactly what happened. Do you wish you could trust God like we did? Sadly her son became ill and died and the widow was very angry with me. She accused me of raising her hopes with the miraculous food and then killing her son. I was so upset, as I was fond of them both. So I took him upstairs and cried out to God "have you brought tragedy on this widow with whom I am staying by causing her son to die? I then stretched myself over the boy and cried out again" O lord my God, let this boy's life return to him" Wonderfully, God did just that and I was able to take him back to his mother alive! You should have seen her, and heard her " Now I know that you are a

man of God and that what you say is the truth" Note, that there were plenty of widows in Israel, but this lady, not an Israelite, was the first to witness God bringing someone back to life. God is truly international!

3 years later God told me to go back to Ahab, who still wanted me dead. On the way I met a wonderful man called Obadiah who was in charge of the King's palace, but was a believer in the Lord and had hidden 100 priests in 2 caves. Ahab was looking for me in one half of the country and he had asked Obadiah to look for me in the other half. We went back together to Ahab, who said "is that you, you troubler of Israel?" " Not me, I replied you and your family have abandoned the Lord's commands and followed Baal. Gather the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah and lets meet at mount Carmel. When they were all gathered I said " how long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him. But if Baal is God, follow him' and there was silence. So I set them a test, to build an altar, get 2 bulls, wood but don't light a fire. Call on the name of your God to send fire. The God who answers with fire-he is God. They agreed. The 450 prophets of Baal went first. They danced round the altar calling on Baal until noon. I then began to suggest that they shouted louder in case Ball was busy thinking, travelling or maybe he was asleep! So they did shout louder and cut themselves, which is forbidden for God's people to do, until 6pm.

Then I called the people quietly to “come here to me” They came. I rebuilt the altar of the Lord with 12 stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel. I dug a trench round the bottom of the altar, big enough to hold 30 litres of water. When everything was ready I asked them to pour water all over the sacrifice, not once but three times, and the water filled the trench. I then prayed “ God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Answer me so that these people will know you are God, and that you are turning their hearts back to you” And God did-he burnt up the wood, the sacrifice the stones and the water in the trench. I ordered all the evil prophets of Baal to be killed. I then told Ahab to go and have a meal because rain is on its way. I went back to the top of mount Carmel, I was exhausted, sat down with my head between my knees, and waited for the first rain for 3 years. Six times I sent my servant to see if there were any clouds, each time ‘No’. The seventh time he said that there was a cloud as small as a man’s hand. That was enough, I warned Ahab to hurry home so that his chariot didn’t get stuck in the mud of the storm.

Ahab told his evil queen what I had done to her prophets of Baal and she swore she would kill me. So I ran for my life. I sat down exhausted, under a tree, and asked God to take my life as I had had enough, enough of running away all the time. I fell asleep, an angel woke me up with food and drink, I fell asleep again, was woken again with more food, which I really needed as I then walked for 40 days, to Mt Horeb, where God gave Moses the 10 commandments, and hid in a cave. “ Elijah, what are you doing here” asked God. I replied “ I have been so zealous for you. The Israelites have rejected your commandments, broken down your altars, killed your prophets, and I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill

me!” I was told to go to the mouth of the cave, and the Lord would pass by. First a wind so strong that it split rocks, then an earthquake, followed by fire. But the Lord was not in any of them. Then came a whisper. When I heard it I pulled my cloak round my face. A voice then asked me the same question again, “what are you doing here Elijah?” I complained again that I was the only one left. The Lord then said “Go back the way you have come and anoint Hazael King of Aram, Jehu, king of Israel, and Elisha to succeed you as my prophet, and by the way I have 7000 people in Israel who haven’t bowed down to Baal.”

That was so encouraging that I went to find Elisha, who was ploughing his fields, and anointed him. After saying goodbye to his family he came with me. We met up with Ahab twice more. The first time I told him that God had judged him, and the second time when I went to challenge him about killing poor Naboth, whose vineyard he had stolen. It is a wonderful story, but I haven’t time to tell it now.

God told me I was to be taken up to heaven soon, so I told Elisha to stay behind as I was off to Bethel. This happened three times, and each time Elisha said “as surely as the Lord lives I will not leave you.” What a devoted man Elisha was. Then, suddenly a chariot of fire arrived and came between us. I was carried to heaven in a whirlwind, while Elisha stayed behind.

One final amazing thing happened to me, I was taken, with Moses, to meet Jesus when He was transfigured, and we heard God say “ this is my Son whom I love; with him I am well pleased; listen to him.” I represented the prophets in the OT, Moses represented the Law and Jesus was the Saviour.