

Doctrine of Elijah

A Brief Chronology of the Public Ministry of Elijah the Prophet

1. The Bible says that Elijah the prophet was a Tishbite who was *[also] of the inhabitants of Gilead.*

- *1 Kings 17:1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*
- *2 Kings 9:36 Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel:*

The reference to being a Tishbite may indicate that Elijah was from a town named Thisbe in Galilee (in the territory assigned to Naphtali).

It is probable that sometime in his life Elijah relocated and became identified with Gilead, a mountain region east of the Jordan River 3,000 feet above sea level.

Extending about 60 miles from near the south end of the Sea of Galilee to the north end of the Dead Sea, Gilead is about 20 miles wide. It is bounded on the west by the Jordan River, on the south by the land of Moab, on the north by the Yarmuk River, and on the east by the desert.

2. As a person Elijah was somewhat unusual in that his clothing and hairy body was noticed.
 - *2 Kings 1:8 And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.*
3. Elijah appears suddenly on the stage of human history to present the message that God had put on his heart. Judgment was coming to Israel in the form of a drought.
 - *1 Kings 17:1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*
4. For his prophetic utterances the king of Israel [873-753 BC], Ahab, immediately persecuted Elijah.

5. Escaping to the wilderness, Elijah was miraculously fed by ravens.

- *1 Kings 17:2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 5 So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.*

6. When the brook dried up Elijah, by divine direction was sent to Zarephath, where he would be sustained in the household of a widow, whose meal and oil were miraculously increased.

- *1 Kings 17:7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.*

The story is very lovely for the poor woman thought she was about to die. After cooking a last meal for herself and her son she was prepared to Lay down and perish. But *“Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. 16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah” (1 Kings 17:13-15).*

7. The goodness of the woman towards Elijah led to the prophet being in a position to perform a miracle, not once but twice, for the Bible says that the poor woman’s son did die suddenly. The cause of death is unknown but the woman was clearly in anguish of soul. In fact she blamed Elijah for the death.

- *1 Kings 17:18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?*
- While the accusation was foolish and unfair Elijah was able to bring the child back to life by the power of prayer and the grace of God.
- *1 Kings 17:22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.*
- *1 Kings 17:23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.*

Well, that made the mother very happy. Immediately her opinion of Elijah changed once more. *And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth* (1 Kings 17:24).

8. Having remained in exile long enough, it was the will of the Lord for Elijah to return to the king's court. A message was sent to Ahab through Obadiah requesting an audience.
 - An audience requested. *1 Kings 18:1 And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. 2 And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria.*
 - A prophet resented. *1 Kings 18:17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*
9. Of course it was not Elijah that troubled Israel but the king, in that he was leading the nation into idolatry by following Baal (1 Kings 18:18).
10. To resolve the issue Elijah proposed that there be a battle of the gods held on Mt. Carmel. The challenge was accepted with disastrous results for the worshippers of Baal.
 - *1 Kings 18:26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.*
11. Watching the madness of the moment Elijah had a little bit of fun. He derisively challenges the priests of Baal to shout a little louder suggesting that Baal was on a journey or maybe he was just asleep.
 - *1 Kings 18:27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.*
12. But it was to no avail. Now it was Elijah who called upon the name of the Lord. And when he did the *fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench* (1 Kings 18:38).
13. Suddenly, filled with righteous anger, Elijah seized the moment of victory to destroy the leaders of idolatry. "*Kill the prophets of Baal!*" cried Elijah.
 - *1 Kings 18:40 Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.*

14. Returning to the court of king Ahab, Elijah had a word of promise: it was going to rain very soon. The spiritual ears of Elijah listening to the voice of God heard “*a sound of abundance of rain*” (1 Kings 18:41).
15. While Ahab went to prepare a celebration of better times, Elijah went back to Mt. Carmel to pray and watch. Soon a cloud appeared the size of a man’s hand (1 Kings 18:44). Large black clouds and wind followed. A thunderstorm broke forth over the land and there was water once more, the gift of God’s grace.
- *1 Kings 18:44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.*
16. When Ahab shared with Jezebel all that had transpired she was not impressed. In fact, she was furious. Her will had been denied. Her prophets had been killed. “*Who was this hairy ape of a man in weird clothing that dared to defy her?*” She would kill him!
17. The word went out. Within twenty-four hours Elijah would be dead! Said Jezebel,
- *1 Kings 19:2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.*
18. When the words of Jezebel reached the ears of Elijah something happened in his heart. Elijah became afraid. In fear “*he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belonged to Judah, and left his servant there*” (1 Kings 19:3).
19. In his escape to the wilderness from the fierceness of Jezebel, Elijah found safety but also depression. So low did the spirits of the prophet sink that he prayed that he might die.
- *1 Kings 19:4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.*
20. But God was not through with his servant. Elijah would not die. Divine provision would be given instead. Elijah would be given strength for the next part of the journey the Lord had for him.
- *1 Kings 19:5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. 6 And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. 7 And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.*

- *1 Kings 19:8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.*
21. The divine meal allowed Elijah to travel forty days and nights until he came to Horeb, the mount of God. Located in the Sinai Peninsula Mt. Horeb was the place where Moses heard God speaking through the burning bush (Exodus 3:1) and where the law was given to Israel.
22. It was at Horeb that God met with Elijah. The Lord had a question for His servant. “Elijah,” God asked, “What are you doing here?”
23. For Elijah, that was an easy question to answer. He was in the wilderness to hide. His life was in jeopardy. Perhaps the Lord did not realize that Elijah was the last of the prophets left and the queen was trying to kill him too.
- *1 Kings 19:10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*
24. The Lord was neither amused nor impressed, for Elijah was wrong about being alone. But all that was inconsequential for the moment. What Elijah desperately needed was a renewed awareness of God in his life.
25. To produce this awareness Elijah was instructed to go and stand upon mount Horeb before the Lord. God was going to pass by.
- *1 Kings 19:11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks 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:*
26. While Elijah stood on the mountain top
- a strong wind blew by—but God was not in the wind. *1 Kings 19:11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks 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:*
 - After the wind there was an earthquake—but the Lord was not in the earthquake.
 - A flash of fire followed the earthquake, but the Lord was not in the fire.

- Then came a still small voice. Ah, it was the voice of God *1 Kings 19:13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?*

27. Now Elijah could talk to God and the Lord could talk to Elijah. God had some more work for Elijah.

- First, Elijah was to go to the wilderness of Damascus, find a man named Hazael and anoint him to be king over Syria. *1 Kings 19:15 And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria:*
- Second, Elijah was to find Jehu the son of Nimshi and anoint him to be king over Israel. *1 Kings 19:16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.*

The fact that Israel still had a king in Ahab and a queen in Jezebel did not matter. He who rules in the affairs of men was about to give the throne to another.

- *“And oh, Elijah, one more thing,” said the Lord. “You are not alone. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him” (1 Kings 19:18)*

28. Exercising gospel obedience Elijah went to find the men who were to rule Syria and Israel. But along the way an opportunity came to enlist a young man in the work of the Lord. The Bible records the call of Elisha to the prophetic ministry. When Elijah left Mt. Horeb he *“found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. 20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? 21 And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him” (1 Kings 19:19-21).*

29. The ministry of Elijah would one day come to a close and a spiritual successor was needed. Elisha would be the successor of Elijah.

30. In summary the ministry of Elijah would focus on six great miracles and six major prophecies.

31. As a worker of (six) miracles Elijah had

- increased the oil of the widow of Zarephath (I King 17:13ff);
- raised the son of the woman of Zarephath from the dead (1 Kings 17:18ff);
- caused rain after seven years of drought;
- caused fire to consume the sacrifice in the contest with Baal;
- and called fire down upon the soldiers of Ahaziah, king of Israel. *2 Kings 1:10 And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. 11 Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. 12 And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. 13 And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight.*
- and divide the waters of the Jordan. *2 Kings 2:8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.*

31. In addition to his great miracles, Elijah uttered (five) major prophecies as he

- foretold of a drought. *1 Kings 17:1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. 2 And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying,*
- foretold the coming of rain. *1 Kings 18:1 And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. 2 And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria.*
- declared the destruction of Jezebel. *2 Kings 9:36 Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel:*
- predicted the death of Ahaziah (a-ha-zi'a; "has grasped Jehovah").

Ahaziah was the wicked son of Ahab, king of Israel. He was as completely under the control of Jezebel and idolatry as was his father. *1 Kings 22:51-53 Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. 52 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: 53 For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.*

When Ahaziah became sick he sought counsel from false gods only to receive a shocking revelation from God. *2 Kings 1:4 Now therefore thus saith the LORD [unto Ahaziah] Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.*

The Lord was angry with Ahaziah and administered divine discipline. *2 Kings 1:17 So [Ahaziah, 853-852 BC] he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son.*

- Elijah announced that a plague will be sent as a judgment upon the people in the time of Jehoram, [ninth] king of Israel [as Joram]. *2 Chronicles 21:12-15 And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, 13 But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself: 14 Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: 15 And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day.*

32. His miracles over, his prophetic ministry finished, Elijah made preparation to go to heaven—not by death but by translation. The story is recorded in 2 Kings 2.

- *2 Kings 2:1 And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. 2 And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. 3 And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. 4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. 5 And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered,*

Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. 6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. 7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. 8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. 9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. 10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. 11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. 13 He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; 14 And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. 15 And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

33. Following his departure into heaven a promise given many years later through the prophet Malachi that Elijah would one day return to earth.

- *Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:*

34. After Elijah appeared in a spiritual body with Moses to visit Jesus at His transfiguration the Lord explained that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of Elijah's return.

- *Mark 9:4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.*
- *Matthew 11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*