

Elijah

1 Kings Chapter 11:7

THE MAN

Draw map

When we mention the name of Elijah – [what picture comes to mind?](#) [How do you visualise the prophet Elijah and what do you know of him?](#) Write it down and keep it in your bible somewhere and at the end of this series of lessons we will see if your perception of him has changed.

There was a prophet of God, from Tishbite, whose name was Elijah. Elijah's name meaning "My God is Yahweh" reflects his character as a man totally dedicated to God. Because of this commitment God was able to use Elijah powerfully.

His is one of the most colourful and exciting biographies in the bible. His story is told in the middle of the accounts of the Kings of Israel and Judah, between [1 Kings 17](#) and [2nd Kings 2](#). These chapters recount three aspects essential to understanding Elijah's role and ministry. The miracles, the messages and the man himself. But we are going to start with the man himself followed by the message and then the miracles.

He was a Gileadite which was a region east of the Jordan, an area which had been allotted to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. The loneliness of the prophet Elijah encompasses every part of his life and ministry thus, in the capital and the northern kingdoms; he would have been a "country yokel." He was probably regarded by many as a fanatic from an uncivilized back water of the kingdom yet, it is from such backwaters, that God often chose prophets and messengers whether it was from Gilead or Galilee.

This often serves as a witness against people who regard themselves as better than the rest, for God can find among them, the so called righteous, no one with sufficient faith as a messenger of the divine word.

In Elijah's case, his ministry brought him into contact with those who had no regard for his simple religion of worshipping "Yahweh" alone, because they were already worshipping other so called deities that they had put before the one true God. They preferred the sophisticated religion of the urban Canaanites which integrated Gods from such powerful and wealthy centres such as Tyre. Idols such as Baal, Ashtoreth, Bel or Nebo – gods made of wood, gold or silver.

Elijah's call to confront this wickedness was an example of a called lone minister, standing against the power of hundreds of opponents supported by the state.

[1 Kings 18:19](#). God's effectiveness was unhindered by the uneven sides. Indeed it all the more dramatically displayed the power of faith at work. But such an experience could only enhance the feeling of loneliness which Elijah must have felt.

For two years he had been in hiding with few companions other than a widow and her son. ([1 Kings 17:1–24](#)) which we will cover in a later lesson. Therefore, it is no surprise when Elijah fearing the reprisals of Jezebel the wife of Ahab the king of Israel, fled for his life to Horeb. ([1 Kings 19:1–8](#))

Elijah believing himself to be the only prophet left in Israel seeks sanctuary in a cave where he encounters the Lord who informs him that there are 7000 faithful souls left in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal. The divine presence does not rely on such demonstrations of power as miracles or great acts such as dividing the red sea, the burning bush the manna from heaven etc. But in the "quietly spoken word."

Elijah

Further, his work would not be alone because there were others doing the same thing in different parts of the land, so, therefore, we today should not be thinking we are on our own and that there is nothing we can do as God is constantly working with us and through us, using our talents that he has given us to promote His message. This can be as simple as just talking to someone. **How else do you think we can promote God's message? Discuss..... Does it take courage? What kind of opportunities should we look for?**

The story continues

God's plan for Elijah as his representative was to send him to the king to dissuade him from Baal worship to turn him back to the one true God.

Now Ahab the son of Omri became King of Israel and he reigned over Israel for twenty two years. **1 kings 16:29** onwards. Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him. It came about that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal King of the Sidonians who were Baal worshippers. God specifically told the children of Israel that they were not to marry out with their own people so Ahab's first sin was to marry a Sidonian who introduced him to idol worship. He possibly thought that he could have a foot in both camps by worshipping "Yahweh" and Baal simultaneously.

Ahab built a temple to Baal in Samaria and Asherah which were meant to be representations of El the wife of the chief Canaanite God. By doing this he provoked and angered the Lord God more than any other king of Israel. Elijah was sent by the Lord to vigorously oppose both the words and actions of both Baal worship and those who engaged in it.

Elijah's relationship with Ahab was the most significant illustration of the clarity of the prophet's message and the failure to repent on the part of Ahab. No king of Israel received as many warnings and yet no king of Israel fell as deeply into sin as Ahab.

Elijah's ministry began with a warning to Ahab of drought. **1 Kings 17; 1. "Now Elijah the Tishbite from Tishbite in Gilead said to Ahab – As the Lord The god of Israel lives ,whom I serve, there will be neither dew , nor rain in the next few years except at my word."** This obviously went right over King Ahab's head because all he could do was send out search parties to try and capture the prophet. The word of the Lord came to Elijah then saying, **"Go away from here and turn eastward and hide in the Cherith Ravine east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there."** So he did what the Lord had told him.

He went to the Cherith ravine and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening and he drank from the brook." In time the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land then the word of the Lord came to him and told him to go to Zerephath in Sidon and stay there.

End of First Lesson

Next week we will get into the story and find out what happened. We will hear about the widow of Zerephath. Elijah trusted the Lord implicitly at this stage but later we will see how even Elijah began to doubt.