

# Who Was Elijah And What Can We Learn From Him?

As I continue to read the Scriptures, of all the people written about, there are some that I find more fascinating than others. One of those is Elijah. He is certainly one of the more mysterious figures of the Old Testament. Regardless of his reputation and great works, what does the story of Elijah have to do with us today? Could anything about Elijah's life be relevant to our personal lives today?

Let's recount some of the highlights of his life and learn what God has to teach us...

**It is true, what they say "Where God guides, God provides"**

We are first introduced to Elijah in 1 Kings 17:

*1 Kings 17: 1 Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, "As surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives—the God I serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years until I give the word!" 2 Then the Lord said to Elijah, 3 "Go to the east and hide by Kerith Brook, near where it enters the Jordan River. 4 Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I have commanded them to bring you food." 5 So Elijah did as the Lord told him and camped beside Kerith Brook, east of the Jordan. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat each morning and evening, and he drank from the brook. 7 But after a while the brook dried up, for there was no rainfall anywhere in the land.*

In the opening verse, it becomes very clear who Elijah is, which is an ambassador and servant for God. It also doesn't take long to see how bold he is, this is the king of Israel he's talking to. Up until this time King Ahab is the vilest

king to come along and worse yet he's married to Jezebel, an evil princess from neighboring Sidon (1 Kings 16: 31).

Then, after telling the king that there'll be a drought in his land for the next few years, God sends him to hang out by a brook for an unspecified period of time.

### **One might think (like me) that God would have a "better plan"**

Imagine not only being sent to a brook to hang out for a period of time but being fed by ravens twice a day? There are many ways that God can provide for us, and this is just one great illustration. After a while, the brook dries up, because of the very drought that he called upon the land. One thing to learn is the fact that although the brook dried up it did not mean that God was not going to provide any longer, it simply meant that he needed to be reassigned.

I seem to "read into" my circumstances too often which can lead to a bad conclusion and one that doesn't honor God. For example, let's say that you or someone you know lost their job. Is that a bad thing? For "natural thinkers" of course, it's a bad thing, remember last week, about being spiritually minded? For the spiritually minded, losing a job simply means that God has other plans and you're being reassigned.

**Lesson:** *We don't always know what's going on and we're not supposed to, but you can be certain that when you place your life in the hands of the Creator, He'll provide for you.*

### **No job is too small**

*8 Then the Lord said to Elijah, 9 "Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a widow there to feed you."*

*10 So he went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her,*

*“Would you please bring me a little water in a cup?” 11As she was going to get it, he called to her, “Bring me a bite of bread, too.”*

*12 But she said, “I swear by the Lord your God that I don’t have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die.”*

*13 But Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you’ve said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what’s left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son.14 For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!”*

*15 So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her son continued to eat for many days.16 There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.*

## **Do you think any of your time or talents are being wasted?**

We are uncertain as to how long Elijah stays with the widow. I think it had to be at least a couple of years during the drought which is mentioned in verse 14. One of the things I enjoy about this story is that here is this “great man of God” (which he is) and God gives him the assignment of ministering to this widow. God could’ve had him preaching or evangelizing like Jonah did, or serving a city maybe. For that matter, maybe he served the village of Zarephath, it doesn’t say. We are clear, though, that the widow was the focus of his ministry for that period of time. The story goes on about his time with her and her son and at least another miracle happens while he is there. *(you should read it)*

Other than learning again how God provides for us, one lesson I think that is extremely important for us to learn from this story is this:

**Lesson:** *No matter how much we grow spiritually or learn in our studies, there is no job “too small”. Our immediate and most important ministry will always be to those that are closest to us. Love those that God has put in your life the most and you are an obedient servant.*

## **You are not alone**

*But the Lord said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”*

*1 Kings 19: 10* Elijah replied, “I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.” ... *18* Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him!”

These verses take place when Elijah was running from King Ahab’s wife Jezebel, who had threatened his life after the contest on Mount Carmel. He apparently thought that he was the “only one left” that serves God. In verse 18 we read otherwise. God made sure he knew that he was not alone. I think this is a great reminder for us today when we feel all alone in our zeal for God. This is a great reason for us all to regularly enjoy fellowship with other believers, which seemed to be lacking in Elijah’s life at the time.

**Lesson:** *Regardless of how bleak things seem to be, we are not alone.*

## **Even the “great ones” can’t do everything**

*1 Kings 19: 15* Then the Lord told him, “Go back the same way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus. When you

*arrive there, anoint Hazael to be king of Aram. 16 Then anoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from the town of Abel-meholah to replace you as my prophet.*

After meeting with God in the cave on Mount Sinai (Horeb), he was given these instructions: 1. Anoint Hazael to be king of Aram. 2. Anoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be king of Israel. 3. Anoint Elisha to replace himself as God's prophet. Can you think of more important things to be told to do? I mean, really? Anoint a couple of kings? That's amazing, isn't it?

We know that he anoints Elisha, that happens in verse 19, but what about the other two tasks?

*2 Kings 8: 13 Hazael responded, "How could a nobody like me ever accomplish such great things?" Elisha answered, "The Lord has shown me that you are going to be the king of Aram."*

*2 Kings 9: 1 Meanwhile, Elisha the prophet had summoned a member of the group of prophets. "Get ready to travel," he told him, "and take this flask of olive oil with you. Go to Ramoth-gilead, 2 and find Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi. Call him into a private room away from his friends, 3 and pour the oil over his head. Say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: I anoint you to be the king over Israel.' Then open the door and run for your life!"*

## **A clear example of delegation found in Scripture**

Notice that the other two tasks were delegated to Elisha. Why would God tell Elijah to do something when He knew that it would be Elisha that would actually do it? I don't know. It could've been simply the chain of command. At the time Elijah was the master and Elisha was the disciple so the commands would've come to Elijah first and he passed them on to Elisha. It is interesting, to say the least.

**Lesson:** *Just because God has given you work to do doesn't mean that you'll see it accomplished in your lifetime.*

For those of you that have read the story of Elijah, you know that these are just a few highlights. I've barely scratched the surface. Between Elijah and Elisha, there are some incredible events that take place and I encourage you to read about them. These were two great servants of God and models of dedication.

Keep this in mind as well:

*James 5: 16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. 17 **Elijah was as human as we are**, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! 18 Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.*

As great as Elijah was, James reminds us that he is as human as we are.

**Lesson:** *Elijah was simply an ordinary man who took his service to God seriously and God did many great things through Him because of it.*

**God can do many great things through you if you'll only commit yourself to Him.**

*"Dear Lord, you are great and I stand in awe of you. There is nothing you can't do and no one compares to you. Who are we that you even consider us? How is it that you love us so much? Thank you for calling us, leading us, and sending your son to die for us. That we might experience life in its fullest. Draw us near to you so that we might become more like you. Thank you for continuing to work in us. In Jesus' name, amen."*

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