

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **1Kings 17:18-19**. From Roy H. Enoch (12-06-1993).
- B. The name ELIJAH means "God is Jehovah" and in Greek it is Elias.
- C. He comes on the scene without any background (1Kgs 17:1).
 - 1. He is introduced without the usual formula "The word of the Lord came to . . ."
 - 2. "Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead."
Tishbe was about ten miles north of the Jabbock River on the Eastern side of the Jordan, about half way between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.
 - 3. "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives," was an expression commonly used in oaths and here it confirms the threat. It emphasizes the eternity and reliability of God and His power to bring about the threat of the drought.
- D. Thus we are introduced to one of the most fascinating characters of OT history is presented as a man of great spiritual strength.
 - 1. As a fearless, bold and dauntless reformer; see the contest on Mt. Carmel (1Kgs 18:17-46).
 - 2. As a rebuker of kings (1Kgs 21:20; 2Kgs. 1:16).
 - 3. As a mighty intercessor, praying with faith and intensity.
 - a. Raising the widow's child from the dead (1Kgs 17:20,22).
 - b. Praying for fire on Mt. Carmel (1Kgs. 18:36-38; Jas. 5:17).
 - 4. As a man subject to discouragement; fleeing from Jezebel (1Kgs. 19:4).
 - 5. As one capable of fallible judgment (1Kgs 19:4,18).
 - 6. As a prophet divinely honored (2Kgs 2:11; Mt. 17:3).
(Carried into the heavens by a chariot of fire).
 - 7. As a performer of miracles (1Kgs 19:8).
 - 8. As a God-inspired prophet ready to obey and trust God (1Kgs 17:1; 21:9-24; 2Kgs 1:2-17).
 - 9. As a saint whose end was glorious (2Kgs. 2:1).
- E. It should strengthen our faith by studying the life and work of this great man of God in the six episodes described in Scripture.

I. HE FIRST APPEARS BEFORE AHAB TO PRONOUNCE GOD'S PUNISHMENT FOR IDOLATRY.

See 1Kings 17:1.

- A. It was not a task for a weak and timid spirit, as Obadiah said (1Kgs. 18:10).
- B. God preserved and protected him these three years by taking him out of Ahab's jurisdiction.
 - 1. He was told to go to the Brook Cherith, east of the Jordan and north of the Dead Sea.
 - 2. God promised that the ravens would feed him, and they brought him "bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook." 17:6.
 - 3. When the brook dried up, God told him to go to Zarephath, between Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia.
 - a. He was told that a widow would provide for him (1Kgs. 17:8).
 - b. The faith of this Gentile widow was as great as the prophet's in giving him of the last bit of food she had for herself and her son.
 - c. But they were all sustained for the remainder of three and a half years (Jas. 5:17).
 - d. He brought her son back to life when "there was no breath left in him" (1Kgs. 17:17-24).

II. ELIJAH APPEARS TO AHAB AND CHALLENGES THE PROPHETS OF BAAL AT MT. CARMEL.

- A. The challenge was to the 450 prophets of Baal (the male god of fertility) and 400 prophets of Asherah (the female goddess of fertility).
 - 1. Since Baal was credited with fertility, the drought reflected directly on his power.
 - 2. These all ate at Jezebel's table (she supported them).
 - 3. Yet, only the 450 prophets of Baal are mentioned at Mt. Carmel.

- B. Mt. Carmel was the most fertile strip of land in North Israel.
 - 1. The name CARMEL means "the garden land."
 - 2. It was about fifteen miles long with many streams and fertile valleys.
- C. Elijah is in charge of the challenge.
 - 1. He first rebukes the people (1Kgs. 18:21).
 - 2. He directs the prophets of Baal to offer their bull first since they are so many.
 - a. The bull was the symbol of Baal.
 - b. They were to call on their god for fire: their chief god was Hadad, the god of fire.
 - c. They cry to Baal from early morning until late afternoon.
 - d. Elijah mocked the prophets, and they cut themselves, but Baal did not answer.
 - 3. At the time of the evening sacrifice Elijah calls the people around him (1Kgs. 18:30).
 - a. He rebuilds the altar of the Lord that had been torn down.
 - b. He lays wood on the altar and the bull on the wood.
 - c. He digs a large trench around the altar and has the people fill 4 waterpots 3 times and pour it on the sacrifice, wood and altar until the trench is filled.
 - 4. He prays to the Lord and He sends fire that consumes the sacrifice, wood, stones and all the water in the trench.
 - a. The people all bow down on their faces and say, "The Lord, He is God." 18:39
 - b. He then commands that the prophets of Baal be seized and killed.
 - 5. He tells Ahab to eat and drink for it will soon rain. Elijah and his servant go to the top of Mt. Carmel and Elijah prays seven times and God sends the rain.

III. ELIJAH'S LIFE IS DESCRIBED IN HIS FLIGHT FROM JEZEBEL WHEN SHE THREATENS HIS LIFE.

- A. He fears for his life and goes to Beersheba, leaves his servant, and goes into the desert.
 - 1. It was about 120 miles from Mt. Carmel to Beersheba.
 - 2. A day's journey was 20-30 miles.
 - 3. God sends an angel to feed him and he goes on to Mt. Sinai, another 200 miles, in 40 days and nights without other food.
 - 4. He goes into a cave at Sinai and spent the night.
- B. God calls Elijah in the cave.
 - 1. "What are you doing here, Elijah?"
 - a. We need consciences that questions us like this.
 - b. We need God's word in our hearts that guides us.
 - 2. In his depression, Elijah thought he was the only faithful one, and he wanted to die.
 - a. God told him that there were 7,000 who were faithful.
 - b. God told him of the work that He had for Him.
 - c. We have a tendency to give up too soon.
 - d. He was to appoint kings, and Elisha to follow him.

IV. THE FOURTH EPISODE MAY BE REFERRED TO AS THE "NABOTH INCIDENT (1Kgs 21).

- A. Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard next to his palace in Samaria.
 - 1. Naboth said that he could not sell his family inheritance.
 - 2. Ahab went to bed, turned his face to the wall and pouted.
- B. Jezebel said she would give the vineyard to him.
 - 1. She had Naboth falsely accused and killed (1Kgs. 21:8-14).
 - 2. She then told Ahab to take possession (1Kgs. 21:15).
- C. God sends Elijah to meet Ahab in the vineyard (1Kgs. 21:19; 22:38).

- V. **THE FIFTH EPISODE OF ELIJAH'S LIFE WAS WITH AHAB'S SON, AHAZIAH (2KGS. 1).**
- A. Ahaziah had fallen and was injured, and sent his servant to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether he would recover.
 - B. An angel told Elijah to tell the messengers that since he inquired of an idol rather than the Lord, he would not recover.
 - C. Then the king sent a captain with fifty men to take Elijah.
 - 1. Elijah called down fire from heaven and destroyed them.
 - 2. The same happened the second time.
 - 3. The third captain begged mercy for himself and his men.
 - 4. The Lord told Elijah to go with them.
 - D. Ahaziah died as Elijah had spoken.
- VI. **THE LAST EPISODE WAS ELIJAH BEING TAKEN INTO THE HEAVENS IN A CHARIOT OF FIRE.**
See 2Kings 2:1-11.
- A. Elisha had followed Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, and then to Jericho, and to Jordan.
 - 1. The "sons of the prophets" at Bethel asked Elisha if he knew that Elijah would be taken today and he said yes, be silent.
 - 2. The "sons of the prophets at Jericho" asked the same.
 - 3. When they went to the Jordan, fifty of the "sons of the prophets" went with them and stayed on the west bank when Elijah and Elisha crossed.
 - B. Before he was taken, Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him (2Kgs. 2:9-10).
 - 1. The chariot of fire took Elijah (2Kgs 2:12).
 - 2. He crossed Jordan with the same miracle of parting the waters with the mantle Elijah had used, and by this the sons of the prophets knew that the spirit of Elijah was on Elisha.

CONCLUSION.

- A. All of the incidences recorded about Elijah except his being taken into heaven were related to combating the worship of Baal by the people of God.
- B. We still have to combat attempts to focus on man and his teachings that corrupt the worship of God, or detract from it.
- C. There are many parallels with John the Baptist, but that is another lesson.
- D. Even the strong become discouraged when we lose sight of God's will for us, so let us focus on His word and service.