

Elijah

Non-Writing Prophets · Biblical Prophets

Elijah the Tishbite, from Gilead's rugged terrain, appeared suddenly in Scripture's narrative to confront Ahab and Jezebel's Baal worship with uncompromising boldness. His very name—'My God is Yahweh'—proclaimed his message. He announced a three-year drought, was fed by ravens at Cherith and by a widow at Zarephath (where he raised her son from death), and challenged 450 prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel. There, fire from heaven consumed his sacrifice, vindicating Yahweh and leading Israel to cry, 'The LORD, he is the God!'

Yet immediately after this triumph, Elijah fled from Jezebel's death threat, experiencing such despair that he requested death. God met him at Horeb (Sinai) not in wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a still small voice, commissioning him to anoint kings and his prophetic successor. Elijah confronted Ahab again over Naboth's vineyard, pronouncing doom on his dynasty.

His ministry concluded uniquely: he did not die but was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire with horses of fire, parting from Elisha with a whirlwind. Malachi prophesied Elijah's return before the Day of the LORD, which Christ identified with John the Baptist's ministry. At the Transfiguration, Elijah appeared with Moses, witnessing to Christ as the fulfillment of Law and Prophets.

Note: Elijah's translation without death parallels only Enoch's experience (Genesis 5:24). Jewish tradition expected Elijah to return personally, leading some to ask John the Baptist if he was Elijah (he denied being Elijah literally returned but fulfilled the Malachi prophecy in Spirit). The 'spirit and power of Elijah' characterizes prophetic ministry that confronts apostasy and calls for decision. James cites Elijah's prayer as exemplary: 'Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly' (James 5:17).

Key Verses

1 Kings 18:21

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

1 Kings 18:38-39

Then 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. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.

1 Kings 19:12

And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

2 Kings 2:11

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.

Malachi 4:5

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

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