



## **BIBLE STORIES EVERYONE OUGHT TO KNOW**

**Main and Oklahoma Church of Christ ^ Adult Bible Studies ^ Winter-Spring 2010**

**February 28, 2010**

**Elijah, 1 Kings 17-19**

### **Getting Started**

Elijah's name means "Jehovah is God" and throughout his life, Elijah lives up to his name. He takes numerous stands against the sins of Israel with one message—God rules over the world. Elijah's ministry also foreshadows the coming of God's eternal Kingdom.

### **The Story**

The story of Elijah begins dramatically as Elijah confronts King Ahab with the prophecy of a drought which will come as punishment for the sins of Israel. Elijah tells Ahab the drought will end only at Elijah's word (1 Kings 17:1). To protect Elijah from Ahab, God sends Elijah into hiding, dispatches ravens to feed him, and provides him water. While Elijah is in hiding, God sends him to the home of a widow in Zarephath. Though destitute, she and her son share their flour and oil with Elijah, but it never runs out.

After three years of a drought so terrible that even King Ahab had trouble finding grass for his horses and mules, God sends Elijah to end the drought. A confrontation with 450 prophets of Baal is designed to prove that Jehovah is the only God. As Elijah sets forth the terms to Ahab, thousands come to Mount Carmel to witness the event.

The contest is simple—which God can send fire from heaven to consume a sacrifice, Baal or Jehovah? The prophets of Baal begin the contest. All day they plead for fire by dancing, gyrating, and cutting themselves; yet Baal remains silent. While waiting his turn, Elijah mocks their actions and tells them to yell louder to awake their god or call him back from vacation. As the day ends, Elijah calls on Jehovah to show who is God. Elijah douses the sacrifice with water and surrounds it with a moat of water. In comparison to the large group of Baal priests, one lone figure prays aloud and God sends fire to consume the sacrifice, the altar, and the water. Stunned, the people declare that Jehovah is indeed God. Elijah commands the execution of the 450 prophets of Baal and then tells Ahab to prepare for rain from God.

When Jezebel hears of the defeat at Carmel, she is enraged and seeks to kill Elijah. Elijah flees to Sinai where God takes care of him. Downhearted and discouraged, Elijah enters a cave and complains to God that in spite of his godly zeal and the fact that he alone is righteous, people are seeking his life. God tells Elijah to wait for Him to pass by. God sends a mighty wind, an earthquake, and fire, but God is in none of these. God then speaks to Elijah in a "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19:12) and reassures Elijah that there are 7000 fellow Israelites who have not bowed to Baal. Afterward God commissions Elijah to anoint a king in Syria (Hazeal) and to

anoint a new prophet (Elisha). After these events, God uses Elijah to prophesy in Israel and eventually takes him to heaven in a fiery chariot.

### **What does this story say about God?**

While fearless in his prophesying, Elijah sometimes doubts God's ability to establish His rule on earth. This is most evident after God's defeat of the prophets of Baal when Elijah flees from Jezebel to hide in the desert. Elijah cries out to God who reassures Elijah, does not chide him, and gives Elijah new tasks. God is patient and loving.

Through Elijah, God reminds all people of His supremacy over everything—weather, earthly kingdoms, and idols. God calls for repentance. Though Israel briefly repents, they soon revert to sin and God punishes them with exile. God is steadfast. God also uses the spirit of Elijah to announce His new Kingdom through John the Baptist and Jesus. Thus God uses Elijah even beyond his earthly life.

### **Now, what about our faith?**

This story operates on two significant levels—God's relationship with His people and His relationship with Elijah. No worldly kingdoms can compare with God's Kingdom. God, through Elijah, reminds us that His rule and reign is the only true and lasting Kingdom. On a personal level, Elijah's relationship with God grows even though Elijah, like us, has "ups and downs" in his relationship with God. When Elijah is down, he cries to the Lord for relief. We can do the same. When we cry for God's help, God will respond. Eventually, God will bring us home as he did Elijah.

### **Monday: Read I Kings 16:29-34 and I Kings 17**

1. Describe Ahab and the extent of Ahab's sin.
2. What do you infer about Elijah from the brief encounter he has with Ahab in 17:1-4?
3. Is there symbolic significance in God's using a drought to bring Israel to repentance?

### **Tuesday: Read I Kings 18**

1. Did God need a contest to show he alone is God?
2. Did the contest achieve its intended purpose? Was there long-lasting change in the hearts of the people and their leaders? Why or why not?

### **Wednesday: Read I Kings 19**

1. Did Elijah lack faith when he fled to Sinai, crying to the Lord after God's victory at Carmel?
2. What do God's words (including His "still, small voice") and mighty acts before Elijah at Sinai tell us about God's true nature?

### **Thursday: Read II Kings 2**

1. Why does God take Elijah home?
2. What makes Elijah so special?

### **Friday: Spend some time thinking about God's Kingdom on both the personal and corporate levels.**

1. How do these events in the life of Elijah tie into the Kingdom announced by John the Baptist and initiated by Jesus?
2. If Elijah were alive today, whom would he speak to and what would he say?
3. What does "Jehovah is God" mean to you today in the church and in your own life?