

Eliyahu (Elijah) ~ Part 1

In my last post, we concluded our exploration of the **Letter to the Messianic Jews**. In this post, I am starting a new series with a new format. I have never done a character study before, but I want to do one on the prophet **Eliyahu** (Elijah).

Introduction

Eliyahu ~ Who is this guy and what gives him the right to confront the King of Israel? Once you meet him, you'll never forget him. He is best known for his confrontational leadership style and incredible spiritual victories, **Eliyahu** was characterized by an unwavering tenacity. Despite experiencing periods of fearfulness, hopelessness, and depression, **Eliyahu** remained steadfast. The result? God used him to tear down Israel's alters and idols and change the moral and political landscape of his day. **Eliyahu** is one of the most unforgettable men of the Bible. On the one hand, he dared great exploits for God. On the other hand, he experienced fear, loneliness, and dark depression. Despite **Eliyahu's** flaws, God used him mightily and took him to heaven before he died.

Background

We first meet **Eliyahu** (*"I AM is my God"*) in 1 Kings. **"Eliyahu from Tishbe, an inhabitant of Gil'ad, said to Ach'av (Ahab), 'As Adonai the God of Isra'el lives, before whom I stand, there will be neither rain nor dew in the years ahead unless I say so.'"** 1 Kings 17:1 (CJB). Other than being identified as a **Tishbe** from **Gil'ad** (Gilead), his parentage and early history are unknown. Gilead was located east of the Jordan River and settled by the tribes of Manasseh and/or Gad. Tishbe is situated near the Wadi Chorath.



Graphics courtesy of Wikipedia

Eliyahu shows up on the scene during the reign of King Ahab (**Ach'av**) and Queen Jezebel (**Izevel**, we meet her in 1 Kings 19) in the Northern Kingdom of Israel in approximately 918-908 BCE.

My fascination with **Eliyahu** is best summoned up by this description by Henry H. Halley:

*Elijah's rare, sudden, and brief appearances, his undaunted courage and fiery zeal, the brilliance of his triumphs, the pathos of his despondency, the glory of his departure, and the calm beauty of his reappearance with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration make him one of the grandest characters Israel ever produced.*¹

That doesn't include my belief that **Eliyahu** is one of the two witnesses in Revelation 11.

¹ Halley's Bible Handbook, Deluxe Edition.

Before we get into an in-depth look at **Eliyahu's** ministry, I want to lay a brief background of who he was dealing with in King Ahab (**Ach'av**) and Queen Jezebel (**Izevel**). Six chapters are given to **Ach'av's** reign, while most of the kings of Israel are covered in only part of one chapter. The reason is that the story of **Ach'av** is mostly the story of **Eliyahu**. **Eliyahu** was God's answer to **Ach'av** and **Izevel**. God sent **Eliyahu** to eradicate Baalism, a cruel religion.

Ach'av

Ach'av is a good mystery, combining in himself qualities both good and evil, but, primarily evil. His life and reign include: his marriage to **Izevel**, a heathen princess; his alliance with **Jehoshaphat**, the king of Judah, by the marriage of his daughter **Athaliah** to **Jehoram** the son of **Jehoshaphat**, by which union the two kingdoms were brought into peaceful relations with one another for nearly eighty years; his building enterprises; his prowess and success in warfare; his attitude in the matter of Naboth and his vineyard; and his contacts with **Eliyahu**.

Izevel's character was uniformly and consistently wicked, but Ahab's was not. That he never abandoned the worship of God is seen in the names of some of his children: *Ahaziah*, 'God supports'; *Jehoram*, 'God is exalted'; *Athaliah*, 'God is strong'; and in the fact that his attendant, *Obadiah*, was, both by name ('worshipper of God'), and confession a servant of God. His sin was not that he forsook God for Baal, but that he tried to serve them both.

Like a football at training camp, he was tossed about between **Izevel** and **Eliyahu**, between what was wrong and what was right.

Izevel

Izevel must be reckoned among the wickedest of women; in a class with Potiphar's wife and Lady Macbeth, and with all who have used their femininity to seduce, and to oppose and persecute truth and those who proclaim it. She was reckless, fierce, and licentious, fanatical and subtle; a proud heathen Canaanite, who, when she came into the stream of Israel's history, cursed it beyond recovery. Her arrogance, her thirst for power and her heartless cruelty, have given her a unique place in history. So obsessed in her attempt at killing **Eliyahu** or other prophets, **Eliyahu** thought he was the only one left.

With this background information, in my next post, we will begin to explore the Biblical story of **Eliyahu**.