

“ELIJAH AND ANGELS”

1.) In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. (1 Kings 16:29-33)

It was in this historical context that the prophet Elijah appeared on the scene. The LORD sent him with a message to King Ahab.

And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." (1 Kings 17:1 NKJV)

As you can imagine, after he delivered that message, Elijah had to hide. If rain would come only at his word, he had to hide from the king and his men until the LORD told him it was time to let it rain.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." (1 Kings 17:2-4 NKJV)

Were they real ravens who fed Elijah faithfully every day, bread and meat every morning and evening or were they angels in the form of ravens? After a while the brook dried up for there was no rainfall.

"Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." (1 Kings 17:9 NKJV)

The widow to whom Elijah was sent had only enough oil and meal to make one meagre cake for herself and her son to share. Elijah had faith enough in God to ask her to make that cake for him and she was good hearted enough to do so. After the widow made a cake for Elijah, angels kept her jar of meal and bottle of oil filled as long as the drought lasted. During that time, she fed her son, Elijah, and herself.

2.) And it came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth." So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and there was a severe famine in Samaria. (1 Kings 18:1-2 NKJV) Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals. "Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. (1 Kings 18:17-20 NKJV)

The story of Elijah's challenge to the false prophets on Mt. Carmel is the best known incident in Elijah's life. First he preached to all the Israelites gathered there at the summons of King Ahab:

And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word. (1 Kings 18:21 NKJV)

Elijah then challenged the hundreds of priests of Baal to prove their god was real by calling down fire from heaven to ignite the wood under their sacrifice. After they tried in vain all morning and afternoon, Elijah poured four large containers of water on his altar and sacrifice. He then lifted up a prayer to the LORD God of Israel.

Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there. (1 Kings 18:38-40 NKJV)

Elijah then told Ahab to get something to eat and drink because a mighty rainstorm was on its way. Elijah then went to the top of Mt. Carmel where it overlooks the Mediterranean Sea. He fell prostrate before the LORD begging Him to send rain. The people had cried, "The LORD He is God!" Six times he sent his servant to look out on the Sea for signs of rain. Six times the servant reported fair skies. The seventh time he saw a tiny cloud. Elijah knew his prayer was answered.

3.) And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" (1 Kings 19:1-4 NKJV)

From Mt. Carmel to Mt. Horeb is 280 miles. Elijah ran down the mountain to Jezreel where King Ahab's summer palace was located. When he received Jezebel's threat, he fled Israel and traveled 100 miles through Judah to Beersheba its southernmost city. There he left his servant and traveled a day's journey into the Wilderness. Under a broom tree he prayed that he might die. He fell asleep.

He was awakened by an angel who told him, "Get up and eat!" In Elijah's life angels came to bring him food. It was certainly angels who were directing the ravens where to go and what to do when they were bringing him meat and bread twice a day. It was angels who kept filling the widow's jar of meal and bottle of oil. This time an angel fixed Elijah pancakes on a hot stone and served it with a bottle of water. Elijah ate and went to sleep. The angel made more food and woke him. "Get up; eat some more or the journey will be too much for you." So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. (1 Kings 19:8 NKJV)

The angel came in response to Elijah's prayer to God. God did not do what Elijah had asked. Elijah was tired from his confrontation on Mt. Carmel, tired of fleeing Ahab and Jezebel, afraid. He just wanted to die. Instead, God sent an angel to refresh him and send him on a trip twice as far as he had already traveled. It is only God who directs and sends angels. Sometimes they are visible, usually they are not.

4.) Then the LORD said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. "It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." (1 Kings 19:15-18 NKJV)

After fleeing from Ahab and Jezebel, Elijah traveled over 100 miles with his servant to the southernmost town in Judah. Leaving his servant there, he traveled another day's journey into the Wilderness. There under a broom tree, he told the LORD that he had had enough and he wanted to die. The LORD sent an angel to minister to Elijah much as He would send angels to minister to Jesus in the Wilderness after His forty days of temptation by Satan. After two periods of sleep and two meals of pancakes prepared by the angel, Elijah traveled another 150 miles in forty days in the strength of that food. Arriving at Mt. Horeb, Elijah took refuge in a cave.

After a mighty windstorm, an earthquake, and a fire, the LORD came to Elijah and spoke to him in a gentle, quiet voice. He asked Elijah why he was there. He listened as Elijah poured out his reasons for being discouraged and wanting to die. The LORD answered Elijah's prayer by giving him more work and greater responsibility. To fulfill his assignment Elijah had to walk over 300 miles. He was to anoint two men as kings, train his successor Elisha, and organize schools of the prophets to pastor the 7,000 people still faithful to the LORD.

Having fulfilled these difficult tasks, the LORD then said, "It is enough." He sent His holy angels with a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire to carry Elijah home to heaven and his rewards. A thousand years later, the LORD sent Elijah with Moses to encourage Jesus.

