

Norwood's Notes: Brief Summaries of Bible Stories

These "notes" are intended to provide a general overview of the basic stories of the Bible in the hope of building greater biblical knowledge and encouraging Bible reading and study. For more information, visit www.UjimaChurch.org

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23 - Highlights from 1 Kings 16-19 & 2 Chronicles 17, "The Prophet Elijah"

King Jehoshaphat of Judah was devoted to the Lord and he sent out Levites and priests across the land to teach the people from the Book of the Law of the Lord. The Lord was pleased with Jehoshaphat and strengthened his kingdom, blessing it with peace and prosperity (2Chr 17).

While a descendant of King David reigned in Judah, power struggles, assassinations, conspiracies, and rebellion caused the throne of Israel to be turned over from one wicked and idolatrous ruler to another. One of the kings of Israel, a man named Ahab, was more wicked than all who had reigned before him (1 Kings 16). In those days, the Lord sent the prophet Elijah to King Ahab to tell him that there would be a severe drought, causing famine in the land that would last for years.

As the drought worsened, Elijah drank from a brook and the Lord sent ravens to bring him bread and meat. When the brook dried up, the Lord sent Elijah to a widow living Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Even though she feared that she and her son would starve after the little bit of flour and oil she had was gone, she still made a little cake of flour for Elijah, who promised her that the flour and oil would not run out until the rains returned. Miraculously, as she and her household continued to eat as days passed, neither the jar of flour nor the jug of oil became empty, just as the Lord had promised through the prophet (1 Kings 17).

The widow's son became ill and died. She carried his lifeless body to the prophet, assuming that God must be punishing her for some past sin. Elijah took the boy from her arms, placed him on a bed, and prayed to the Lord. Three times he stretched out across the child's body, crying out to the Lord. The Lord heard Elijah's cry and restored the child's life. The prophet brought the boy back to his mother, alive.

As the famine continued, Queen Jezebel, King Ahab's wife, had persecuted and killed many of the prophets of the Lord. Obadiah, one of Ahab's servants who believed in the Lord, hid 100 of the Lord's prophets in a cave, secretly feeding them. The Lord told Elijah to return to Ahab because he was about to send rain upon the land. Elijah challenged Ahab to have the false prophets of Baal and Asherah to meet him on Mount Carmel. Two offerings would be set up on altars, the false prophets would call upon their idols and Elijah would call upon the Lord

and the true god would be known by whichever offering miraculously caught fire. For half of the day, 850 of the false prophets prayed, worshiped, and even cut themselves to get an answer from Baal, all the while with Elijah mocking them and their false god.

When it was Elijah's turn, he called the people who had gathered to come near to him. He built an altar of twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes, and put wood and the bull offering on the altar. He then ordered that four jars of water be poured, three times, over the altar and offering. Water soaked the offering, the wood, the stones, and even filled the trench dug around the base of the altar. Elijah prayed a simple little prayer to the Lord, and the fire of the Lord burned up the offering, wood, stones, and even licked up the water in the trench! When the people saw it, they cried out, "The LORD, he is God!" Elijah then ordered the people to seize the false prophets who led the people to sin, and he executed them (1 Kings 18).

Afterward, Elijah prayed and told his servant to look out toward the sea. Six times the servant returned saying that there was nothing, but the seventh time he reported that he saw a small cloud. Elijah then told King Ahab that he should depart in his chariot because a great rain was coming. The Lord was with Elijah and he outran the king's chariot from the top of the mountain to the gate of the city as dark clouds covered the sky and rained upon the land.

When Queen Jezebel heard that Elijah had killed the false prophets, she vowed to have him killed. Elijah departed about a day's journey and rested under a broom tree. Depressed that even after the miracle on Mount Carmel, the idolatrous queen's heart had not turned, he felt as though his efforts were in vain. The Lord sent an angel to awaken Elijah from his slumber to find that food had been prepared for him to eat. The angel awakened him from sleep a second time and had him eat again, telling him that he needed to eat, for the journey he was about to go on "too great." On those two modest meals, Elijah traveled for forty days and nights to Mount Horeb, where he stayed in a cave (1 Kings 19). The Lord told Elijah that His would pass by. First a great wind tore across the mountain range and even broke the rocks into pieces, but the Lord was not in the wind. Then an earthquake shook the ground, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. Then a fire came, but the Lord was not in the fire. And then, the sound of a low whisper; and when Elijah heard the whisper, he wrapped his face in his garment and the Lord spoke with him. The Lord told Elijah that he was to anoint new kings, Hazael to rule over Syria and Jehu to rule over Israel. The Lord also told Elijah that he was to anoint Elisha, the son of Shaphat, as his own successor. The Lord reassured Elijah that he was not alone in his faithfulness, that seven thousand in Israel had not worshiped idols and had remained true to the Lord.

Elijah found Elisha plowing a field and he cast his cloak upon Elisha, who became his assistant.

