

WHEN THE WORD IS TRUTH

1 Kings 17:1-24 (p. 555)

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Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth."

1 Kings 17:24

1. Elijah and Ahab

Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word." 1 Kings 17:1

2. Who provides: *Yahweh* or *Ba'al*?

The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. 1 Kings 17:6

3. How to recognize the Word of the Lord

Sometime later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the Lord came to him, "Go at once to Zarepath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food" 1 Kings 17:7-9

- 1) The Word POINTS ME TO JESUS
- 2) The Word REVEALS GOD'S CHARACTER
- 3) The Word CALLS ME TO REPENTANCE (Spurgeon: gets election right!)

Further study of Elijah

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing 1 Peter 1:10

Spurgeon's sermon on 1 Kings 17:8-9 at <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols13-15/chs817.pdf>

Robert Bradshaw's introduction to Elijah at https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_elijah.html. Bradshaw's analysis of Elijah and the Canaanite gods is especially helpful.

Patterson, R. D., & Austel, H. J. 1, 2 Kings, p. 137-139. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 4*. Zondervan Publishing House, 1988.

Alfred Edersheim. *Bible History: Old Testament* (1 Kings 16:34-17:24). Eerdmans, 1975. Eldersheim, a 19th century convert to Christianity, did some great work on our Hebrew roots.

Alexander Maclaren's study at http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/1Kings_am.html#esbt1

From Bradshaw's study:

Elijah in the New Testament

Elijah is the fourth most mentioned OT character in the New Testament, after Moses, Abraham and David, being referred to or quoted 29 times. The majority of these references occur in the Gospels and once each in Romans, James and Revelation.

Table 3: New Testament References and Allusions of Elijah

NT Reference	Interpreted as Referring to	OT Reference
Matt. 3:11; Luke 9:54; 12:49	Jesus	1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:9-14; Mal. 3:1-3
Mark 1:2-3;	John the Baptist	Mal. 3:1 (cited)
Matt. 16:14=Mark 8:28=Luke 9:19	Jesus (by some)	cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6
Matt. 17:3-4, 10-12=Mark 9:4-5, 11-13=Luke 9:30, 33	—	None
Matt. 17: 11-13; Mark 9:11-12	John the Baptist (by Jesus)	cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6
Matt. 27:47, 49=Mark 15:35-36	Elijah himself	None
Mark 6:15=Luke 9:8	Jesus (by some)	No specific reference
Matt. 11:10, 14; Luke 7:27-28	John the Baptist (by Jesus)	cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6
Luke 1:17	John the Baptist (by the angel Gabriel)	Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6
Luke 4:25-26	—	1 Kings 17:9
John 1:21, 25	Not John the Baptist (by himself)	cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6
Romans 11:2	—	1 Kings 19:10, 14 (quoted)
James 5:17	—	1 Kings 18:42
Rev. 11:3-13	Elijah	1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 1:9-16

1) Elijah's call (17:1–6)

1 In those dark times God raised up a light, the prophet Elijah. Reared in rugged Gilead, Elijah was a rugged individualist, a man of stern character and countenance zealous for the Lord. Elijah sought Ahab and delivered the Lord's pronouncement. In contrast to those who were not gods, whose idols Ahab ignorantly worshiped, the living Lord, who was truly Israel's God, would withhold both dew and rain for the next several years.

Already the drought had lain on the land some six months (cf. Luke 4:25; James 5:17 with 1 Kings 18:1); now the reason for it all was to be revealed to Israel's apostate leadership. The message was clear: Israel had broken the pledge of its covenantal relationship with God (Deut 11:16–17; 28:23–24; cf. Lev 26:19; 1 Kings 8:35). Therefore God was demonstrating his concern for both his people's infidelity and their folly in trusting in false fertility gods like Baal. No rain! There would not even be dew until God's authentic messenger would give the word! Unknown to Ahab, Elijah had agonized over the sin of his people and had prayed to the Lord for corrective measures to be levied on his people. Accordingly Elijah was God's logical choice.

2–6 To impress the message and its deep spiritual implications further on Ahab and all Israel, God sent Elijah into seclusion. Not only would Ahab's frantic search for the prophet be thwarted, but Elijah's very absence would be living testimony of a divine displeasure (cf. Ps 74:1, 9). Moreover Elijah himself had much to learn, and the time of solitude would furnish needed moments of divine instruction.

Obedying God's directions implicitly, Elijah walked the fifteen miles from Jezreel eastward to the Jordan River (v.5). There in Kerith, one of the Jordan's many narrow gorges, Elijah took up his residence. Alone and relying solely on divine provision, Elijah was nourished by the available water of Kerith and by ravens sent from God (v.6).

Notes

1 The name Elijah means "Yah is my God." The designation "the Tishbite" is uncertain. The NIV, following the RSV (cf. LXX), interprets it as a place name in Gilead. Since Byzantine times Listib, eight miles north of the Jabbok River, in the area of the shore of Mar Ilyas, has been suggested as Elijah's town. A Thisbe/Tisbeh in Naphtali is known from the apocryphal story of Tobit. This latter identification seems more likely since the MT (followed by the Vul.) literally reads that Elijah was merely one of the "settlers" in Gilead. Thus Elijah had probably come from Tisbeh in Naphtali and had taken up residence among the settlers in Gilead. Dennison (pp. 124–26) suggests plausibly that Elijah's family had been displaced to Gilead during the Aramean Wars of Baasha's time.

The phrase "neither dew nor rain" is reminiscent of David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:21). The importance of these words to the reputation of Baal can be seen in Danel's lament over Aqhat in the Ugaritic literature (see ANET, p. 153).

By "rain" was meant the regular early and latter rain of October/November and March/ April. Their loss would be a mark of God's disfavor (see EBC, 2:253–54). The dew (often falling as heavy as drizzle in some regions of Palestine) was also a sign of God's favor to his covenant people (Deut 33:28; Prov 19:12). However it could be withdrawn from a thankless and apostate people (Hos 14:5; Hag 1:10). How good and pleasant it is when a grateful and obedient people willingly serve God in oneness of heart. Such service becomes as refreshing to God as the dew (Pss 110:3; 133:1, 3).

4 Various suggestions repoint the MT's עֲרָבִים ('ōrābîm, "ravens") in some other way so as to yield something like "merchants" or "Arabs"; all are needless concessions to antisupernaturalism. God's miracles do not need to be buttressed with rationalistic facade.¹

¹ Patterson, R. D., & Austel, H. J. (1988). 1, 2 Kings. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 4: 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job* (F. E. Gaebelin, Ed.) (137–139). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

