

Introduction to the Life of Elijah the Prophet



Background and Early Life

Elijah was a prophet who lived in the 9th century B.C. Elijah is first introduced in 1 Kings 17:1 as delivering a message from God to Ahab, the King of Israel in the first half of the 9th century. Elijah the prophet is sometime referred to as “The Tishbite” as he was from the town of Tishbe. The name Elijah is Hebrew for *Eliyahu* which means “My God is Yahweh”. Little is known about Elijah and his early life and much like Melchizedek; Elijah suddenly emerges with no mention of his parents, his ancestry, training, or early life. He was known as a prophet however

little emphasis is put on his background. He lived in a time when the foundations of the world were being destroyed. It was a time of spiritual apostasy and moral decay.

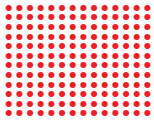
Written by
A Mighty Arrow,
Randy Tadros
St. Mary, Atlanta, GA



Elijah's Attire and Appearance

Elijah stood in striking contrast to the priest and people that worshiped Baal. His attire and appearance are described in 2 Kings 1:7-8, “Then he said to them, “What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?” So they answered him, “A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.” And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.” Elijah is described as wearing camel hair girded with a leather belt which was later noted as being the recognized dress for a prophet in Zachariah 13:4-5, “And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive. But he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth’”. The way that Elijah’s attire is described may indicate that his attire and manner were quite distinctive in the eyes of the people around him.

Although his attire was very different at the



time, it was also symbolic for a number of reasons. The first symbol of his attire reflected his chosen poverty. He chose to live a life with God as his priority and not toward the material things of this world. Secondly, he chose to separate himself from the world, denouncing its pleasures. Thirdly, his attire was a symbol of his official office and purpose in life. He spread the word of God and was determined to proclaim God's message of light to those who were living in darkness.

Elijah as Man of Faith and Prayer

Elijah was not a man of many words, but he was a man of much faith. Through his few but powerful words, his faith in God was clearly apparent. Elijah's strong faith was very clear during his encounter with King Ahab and the prophets of Baal as it is written in the Holy Book of 1 Kings. Elijah was confident that the Lord would hear his prayer and send fire from Heaven to consume the burnt sacrifice. As a result, the people fell on their faces and said, **"The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"** (1 Kings 18:39).

Another example of Elijah's great faith is

recorded in 2 Kings 1:9-12 when the King of Israel sent a captain of fifty with his fifty men to Elijah commanding him to come down from the mountain. Elijah, with great faith, answered and said **"If I am a man of God, then let fire consume you and your fifty men."** God heard the words of the prophet Elijah and sent fire from Heaven to consume the captain of fifty and his fifty men.

Elijah is best known as a man of prayer. St. James uses Elijah as an example of the power of prayer of a righteous man. St. James tells us, "...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit" (James 5:16-18). The fervent prayers of Elijah were heard by God as He did not allow rain to fall on the earth for some time. Yet again God heard his prayers and allowed the heavens to give rain producing fruit on the earth.



Elijah receives food from the ravens



Ascension and Commemoration



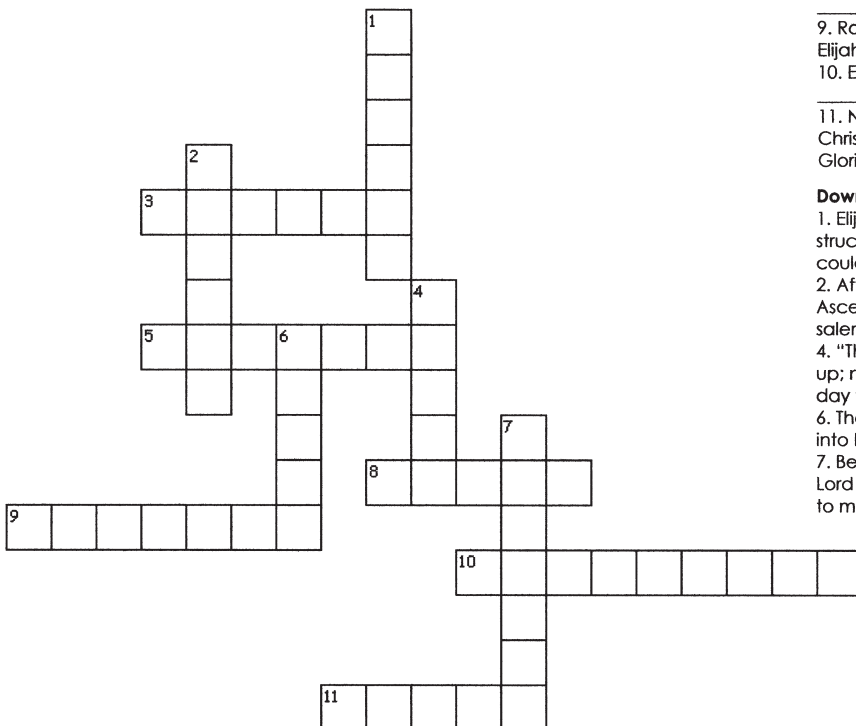
As recorded in the book of 2 Kings 2:11, Elijah did not see death but was taken up in a chariot of fire by a whirlwind to heaven. Although he lived on the earth during the 8th and 9th centuries B.C, Elijah also appears (along with Moses), in the New Testament during the Transfiguration. The appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mountain represents the foretelling of the Lord Jesus Christ's death both from the law and prophets, respectively. This is what St. Luke writes in his gospel referring to what the Lord Jesus Christ, Moses and Elijah were discussing (Luke 9:31).

Although much is not recorded on the early life of Elijah the prophet, his faith and dedication to serve God are those qualities that we must emulate which are surely pleasing in the eyes of the Lord. His fervent prayers and undoubted faith in God exemplified his deep love and service to the Lord. How great a man of God was Elijah the prophet!

The church commemorates the ascension of Elijah the Prophet to Heaven on the sixth day of the Coptic month of Tubah.



Crossword Puzzle On the Glorious Ascension



Across

3. Elijah's disciple.
5. Threatened to kill Elijah.
8. The Glorious Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ is affirmed every time in the Divine Liturgy when we state the _____.
9. Ravens brought bread and meat to Elijah in the Brook of _____.
10. Elijah went to up to Heaven by a _____.
11. Number of days after the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven after His Glorious Resurrection.

Down

1. Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water so he and his disciple could cross over this river.
2. After the Lord Jesus Christ's Glorious Ascension, His disciples returned to Jerusalem from Mount _____.
4. "The bin of _____ shall not be used up; nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth."
6. The son of Jared, who also ascended into Heaven.
7. Before ascending into Heaven, the Lord Jesus led His disciples to _____ to meet with them.

