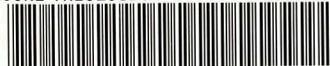


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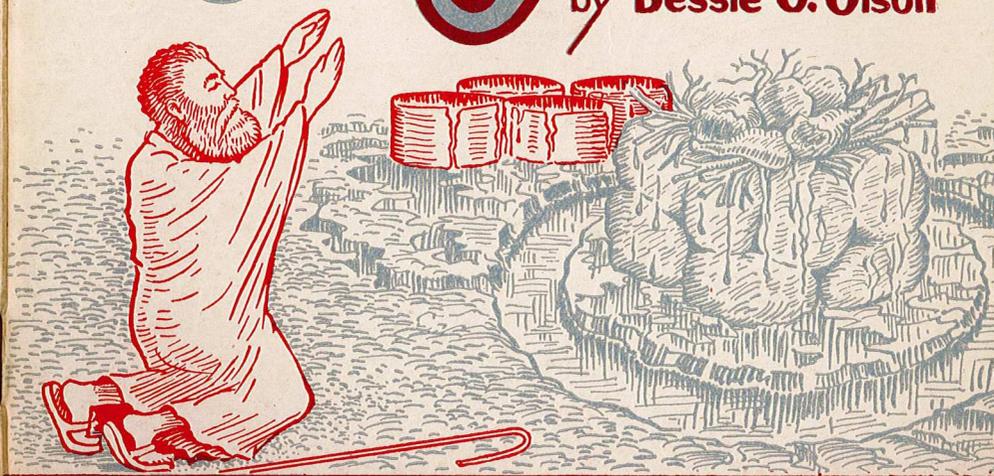
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Elijah

A MAN of MIRACLES

by Bessie G. Olson



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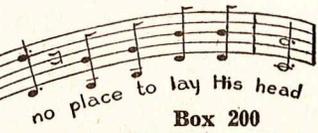
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INTRODUCTION

From out of the unknown, Elijah stepped into the pages of history. He was God-molded and God-directed. He was fed by ravens and by angels. At his word the heavens were shut up and neither dew nor rain fell for three years and a half. He prayed again and rain came. More than once he called down fire from heaven. Thus was the Power of God displayed through Elijah.

Elijah never died. Elijah's God, the God of the Impossible, is also alive today. He is just as able as He was during the lifetime of Elijah on this earth.

This man of miracles, Elijah, walked with God, he talked with God—he obeyed God. His life is a mighty challenge to each of us today. Well might we ask ourselves, after studying Elijah's life, "Are WE living up to all of **our** possibilities? Is not **OUR GOD** still the **GOD OF THE IMPOSSIBLE**?"

Elijah, A Man of Miracles

1.

The children of Israel had been in the land of Promise, Canaan, since the time of Joshua. They had followed the Lord faithfully for a number of years after Joshua was dead, but then sin and idolatry crept in and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was far too much forgotten. The rulers of Israel became corrupt. Things went from bad to worse until the king named Ahab began his reign over Israel. Of this time, God Himself, said, "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him."

He was a selfish, wicked man; he married a woman named Jezebel who was not one of the children of Israel neither was she a good woman; and he stopped serving the Lord and began serving the god of the heathen, Baal, and worshipped him. Such a man sat on the throne of Israel! And Israel was still God's land; the children of Israel, still God's chosen earthly people. God did not permit such wickedness to go on unhindered.

Out in the desert, God had been preparing His man for times such as these during the reign of Ahab. His man was Elijah.

Of Elijah's boyhood and youth we know very little.

He probably was born on the eastern side of the Jordan River because it is said that he was "of the inhabitants of Gilead". He is known as "Elijah the Tishbite" therefore it is supposed that he came from the city of Tishbi in Gilead. The name of his father is not given, neither are we told exactly of which tribe his ancestors were a part. We can be sure if these facts had been important God would have included them in His record of His people. Since He did not, we shall pass over them quickly.

What is important is the fact that Elijah was ready to serve the Lord at the exact time He needed him. In all probability there had been years of training. Evidently these years had been spent in solitude, alone with God. As we have said before, we rarely find a person much used of God who has not at some time in his life been shut off from the world and alone with the Lord. Moses spent forty years on the back side of the desert herding sheep; Joseph spent many years as a slave and a prisoner; even our Lord, in the days of His flesh spent many hours alone with His Father—He knew the value of solitude.

Elijah was ready. God brought him on the scene as suddenly as a bolt of lightning and the nation was as startled as if a mighty clap of thunder had shaken the world.

Without ceremony or ado we see him first as he stands before King Ahab, giving him the message that the Lord had sent. There is nothing spectacular about his person. An ordinary man, he was clad in rough garments made from the skins of goats, and

around his waist he wore a leather belt. His hair and beard were long and shaggy for they had been brushed only by the winds that swept the Judean hillsides. Ahab had probably never heard of him before. He was a stranger at court, yet with boldness we hear him as he speaks to King Ahab. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

He left as suddenly as he had come. There was no time for the king to ask questions. Instead he was left wondering what this strange man had meant. Was he speaking the truth? Would there be a drought?

If so, it was to be stopped only at the word of this strange man. But where was he to be found in case he was needed? Time alone brought the answers to the king, and the answers proved that the shaggy Israelite had spoken nothing but the truth.

The following morning, King Ahab arose early in order to see if there was a dew. There was none. Yet that did not disturb his wicked heart much. "We had a rain last week," he said to himself, "I guess we can stand it for a while without rain so that little fellow didn't need to be such an alarmist. He's probably some eccentric."

2.

After Elijah had spoken the words, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word," he went away, leaving the results

with his God.

As soon as he was alone, God spoke to Elijah, "Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

"Cherith" means "cut off" or "separated", therefore it is possible that Cherith was not the name of a certain brook but rather an understanding between God and Elijah. God did direct him to a brook and perhaps that stream was called by some other name but to Elijah and his God, it was "Cherith", it was exile.

He had turned eastward, as God had directed, after he had given his message to King Ahab, and had come to the hiding place made ready by God Himself. Elijah was weary after the long walk and the strain of the day, he was glad to stretch his tired body on the cool, green grass beside the brook. Fatigue had dulled his faith, and as he lay there looking up into the leafy tree above him, the thought came to him very suddenly, "What if it does rain, after I told Ahab it would not until I said it should. Perhaps I was too hasty or too dogmatic." He felt too weary to move and the future looked hopeless. He was very thirsty. Stiffly he stirred himself to get up and go to the brook. He made a cup of his hand and drank from the crystal clear stream. The coolness of the water was refreshing to his throat. He bathed his face and hands and felt a bit more comfortable. He looked up . . . what was that? Large black birds were coming closer and closer. The birds

saw him yet they did not move from their course, they came directly to him. They were ravens—large, and jet black. As they spread their graceful wings to alight on the grass close to Elijah's feet, their glossy feathers shone in the late afternoon sun. In their heavy beaks they carried food—bread and meat. This they placed on the grass and then flew away.

In awe and wonder, Elijah saw that the food they had brought was fresh and ready to be eaten, lamb that had been roasted and bread that had been baked that day. Elijah remembered God's words, "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there". He gave thanks for this God-sent food, then he ate with relish. He ate, his strength returned, and his faith revived. Then he wondered how he could ever have doubted God. "He has never failed me. He said He would feed me here, that ravens would feed me . . . it has come to pass exactly as He said. His word concerning the rain will be just as sure." Thus ran his meditations.

He remembered the ravens that had brought his food. There had been four of them. That was unusual because ravens are usually seen alone or in pairs, almost never in flocks. Ravens are flesh eating birds and Elijah wondered at the fact that they had brought the food to him. "It is of the Lord," he said, and again he lifted his heart and voice in praise to Him whose resources are limitless.

Elijah slept. The following morning he again drank from the brook. Again he saw the ravens, four of them flying toward him with food in their beaks. He observed the birds a bit closer this time. Their

wingspread must have been at least four feet as they let themselves glide to the ground. This time they dropped their food, then walked about on the ground a bit as if they were wanting to make friends with their special charge. They cawed and cocked their pretty heads, but when Elijah spoke to them they flew away.

Elijah saw that the meat they had brought this time was fresh, so he set about preparing a fire with which to roast it. Yesterday he had been too weary to prepare his own meal so God had sent it ready to be eaten: today he was strong and able to cook his food so God sent meat that was newly butchered. The bread they brought was baked. Again Elijah ate his bread and meat with joy and thanksgiving.

At evening the ravens came again. So they did day after day. Elijah soon saw that it was the same four birds that brought his food each time. He began looking forward to their coming because he was alone; the ravens soon became his earthly companions. His feathered friends grew more and more sociable and finally they lingered with him each time they came.

The days came and went but never once was there dew or rain. The sky was a solid dome of blue day after day, not one fleecy cloud could be seen. The grass that had been so green when Elijah first went to his brook Cherith was now brown and brittle. The leaves above him dropped and started to curl, a few of them lost all courage, turned yellow, and floated softly to the ground.

Elijah noticed that the brook was getting lower and lower. The water that was in it was not as cool

as it had been. The brook rippled and sang when he first went there, but now it scarcely moved and its voice was muffled and sad.

Elijah did not fear. God had fed him just as He had fed His children manna and quail when they were wandering in the wilderness: God would feed him now.

At last the brook dried up. Then God spoke to Elijah, saying, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

To hear God's voice was to obey it. He prepared to leave at once. His friends, the ravens, came once more bringing him bread and meat. They lingered near him while he ate, as if they knew he would be leaving. Elijah bid them farewell. He went on his way in the strength of the food they had brought.

As he was walking along, he saw that the drought was already bringing suffering upon the land. The fields had never yielded their crops, there was famine in the land. It had come to pass exactly as God had spoken.

3.

As Elijah was drawing near to the city gates of Zarephath, he saw a woman gathering sticks. He knew that was the widow of whom God had spoken.

He was thirsty, so he called to her, saying, "Please bring me some water that I may drink."

Perhaps he wondered how she would react to his request since he was a total stranger to her, perhaps he wanted to reassure himself, when he called to her

the second time, saying, "Please, will you bring me a slice of bread also. Just bring it in your hand."

The mention of bread made her stop suddenly. She turned, and looked Elijah squarely in the face. She must have seen, because the Lord prompted her, that this strange man was one in whom the Spirit of the Living God dwelt. She spoke slowly, painstakingly, when she replied, "As truly as the Lord your God lives, I have not a cake, all I have in my house is a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a vessel. Right now I was gathering a couple sticks so I could go home and bake one little loaf that my son and I might eat once more, then we must prepare to die."

Her words brought understanding to Elijah. God had said that a widow woman there would sustain him, He did not, until then, know the desperateness of that widow's condition. He saw that they might be of mutual blessing one to another. By faith, he lifted his heart to God as he said to her, "Fear not. Go and do exactly as you said, but make me first a little cake of that meal and oil, bring it to me. After that, bake for yourself and your son. For the promise of the Lord God of Israel is that the barrel of meal shall not be empty, neither shall the vessel of oil be dry, until that day that the Lord shall send rain upon the earth."

We stop in pure respect for her faith. She had never seen Elijah before, she asked no proof, she went and did as he had asked.

Was her faith rewarded? INDEED. The Living God is ever true to His word. The simple record is, "And she went and did according to the saying of

Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, He spake by Elijah."

At times, when she was weary and weak in body, she was amazed that she had ever had such faith that day just outside the city gate, but she was glad. She saw her friends die of starvation, one after another. Want was on every hand yet she and her house lived on and had enough to eat each day. It is believed that Elijah was with her and her son about two years.

This woman's husband had died sometime before the famine, before the prophet had come to her home in such a mysterious way—she was a widow. It seems that she had but one child, a son—the treasure of her heart. One day this son became very sick—and he died.

Elijah had been with the widow a long time then. She had seen that he was a godly man, a man in whom the Spirit of the Lord dwelt. Yet in the bitterness of her soul, in her utter helplessness when she saw that her only son was dead, the fear of God came upon her. She instantly thought that her own sins had caused this tragedy. She drew the child, whose life had just departed, close to her breast and said to Elijah, "Oh what have I to do with you? Did you come here to my home only to make me remember every sin of my life and then to cause the death of my son?"

"Give me your son," said Elijah, with such tenderness and assurance that she let him take the child. He carried that lifeless boy to his own room, the

room on the second floor that had been his since the day he asked for the first drink and cake. That room had become saturated with prayer. In that room Elijah knew he could pray easier, even as we today know that we can pray more easily in the room to which we are accustomed.

Elijah laid the boy on his own bed, then he prayed, "O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?" He stretched himself upon the lifeless body of the child three times, and cried, "O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again."

God heard. God answered. The "soul of the child came into him again, and he revived."

The child awoke as if he had been sleeping, he yawned and stretched himself. Elijah praised the Lord in his heart. He took the child by his hand and said, "Now let us go downstairs and see your mother."

The two walked down together and into the room where the widow was still weeping. Elijah spoke for she was too blinded by tears to see, "See, your son is alive."

She looked up, she saw, and quickly she embraced her son, her only son, who had been given back to her.

If doubts had entered her mind, they vanished like snow in summer. With the child still in her arms she turned to Elijah and said, "Now I know, by this, that you are indeed a man of God. I know that the word of the Lord in your mouth is true."

4.

The day came when God said to Elijah, "Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." This was after it had not rained for more than three years. Elijah went.

Before he came to the king, he met Obadiah, a man who feared God. Obadiah was the man who saved the lives of one hundred prophets of the Lord at the time the mean queen, Jezebel, attempted to kill all of the Lord's prophets in the land. Obadiah knew Elijah when he saw him, he fell on his face, saying, "Are you indeed Elijah?"

Elijah said, "I am. Go, tell the king that Elijah is here."

Obadiah got up slowly. He looked at Elijah as he asked, "What sin have I committed that you should ask me to do such a thing? Ahab would kill me. He has sent men to every nation and kingdom seeking for you and when they have not found you he has made that nation or kingdom give an oath that their reports were true. Thus carefully has he been searching for you, and now you ask me to go and tell him you are here. Now as soon as I leave you it will come to pass that the Spirit of the Lord will take you away where I know not, then when I come to get you and cannot find you again, Ahab will kill me. I have feared the living God from my youth. And has it not been told you that I saved the life of one hundred prophets when Jezebel would have killed them all? I did, and now are you still asking me to go tell Ahab that Elijah is here? He will kill me."

Elijah said firmly, "As sure as our God lives, the God before whom I stand, I will show myself to Ahab today."

Obadiah went and soon Ahab was meeting Elijah.

Ahab asked, "Are you he that troubles Israel?"

And Elijah answered, "I have not troubled Israel. You have. You and your father's house have troubled it, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and are following Baal."

Before Ahab had time to say one word, Elijah continued, "Now send word out that all Israel is to meet me at Mount Carmel; and the prophets of Baal, all four hundred and fifty, as well as the prophets of the groves, the four hundred who eat at Jezebel's table."

Ahab did so. At Mt. Carmel all the people and also all the false prophets met Elijah as soon as they had time to gather there from all parts of the land.

Elijah stood before that great gathering. It was very early in the morning, and he said, "You people of Israel, why is it that you are unstable in your worship? Why do you halt between two opinions? If the Lord is the true God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."

The people answered him not a word.

When Elijah heard their silence, he continued, "I alone remain a prophet of the Lord, but Baal has four hundred and fifty men. Now, therefore, let them give us two bullocks. Let them choose one for themselves, cut it in pieces, lay it on wood, and put no fire under: then I will likewise dress the other bullock, lay it on the wood and put no fire under. Then the prophets of Baal will call on the name of their gods

and I will call on the name of the Lord. The God that answers by fire, let him be God."

Then the people said, "Your word is good. Do so."

Elijah turned to the prophets of Baal, saying, "Now you choose first. Dress the animal and place it on the wood on the altar but put no fire under. Then you call on Baal." They did so.

"Oh Baal, hear us. Send fire!" they called. No voice answered and no fire fell. They leaped upon the altar and called again. It was still early in the day when they began to call, they called until noon and still no reply came.

At noon, probably with a twinkle in his eye, Elijah said to them, "Cry louder for he is a god you know . . . perhaps he is busy, or talking, or has gone on a trip. Or perhaps he is asleep so you'll have to awaken him. You must use more voice in calling to him."

They did call louder. They began to cut themselves with knives to show their god their sincerity. Thus they carried on until near evening. No answer came.

Then Elijah said to the people. "Come here to me." They came. They watched him as he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down, which no one had seemed to care for. He took the twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, and built the altar in the name of the Lord. He made a trench about the altar; then he placed the wood in order and prepared the bullock properly and placed the pieces on the wood.

"Now fill four barrels with water, and pour it all on the bullock that is to be the burnt offering, and also on the wood," said Elijah. He saw that the people

were wanting to help him. They poured the four barrels of water, as he directed.

Elijah said, "Do it a second time." Four more barrels of water were poured over the offering.

Elijah said, "Do it the third time." And four more barrels of water were poured over the offering.

By this time the water had soaked the offering, the wood, and the altar and had also filled the trench.

Then, in respectful silence, the people heard Elijah pray, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word, Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again."

Elijah had neither cried with a loud voice nor cut himself. Fire fell from above . . . the fire of the Lord. It consumed the meat offering and the wood . . . it kept on burning. It consumed the stones, the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench.

It was enough. The people fell on their faces, saying, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God!"

The prophets of Baal had stood watching but when they saw how things went, they began to move away. Then Elijah called, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape."

Elijah had them taken down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. God had given him a mighty triumph over evil.

5.

King Ahab had stayed close, watching. The dead prophets were on the bank of the brook for Elijah had finished that unwelcome task. Ahab lingered as if he knew not what his next move ought to be.

"Get up on your feet. Eat and drink for I can hear the sound of abundance of rain!" Thus spoke Elijah to the king.

Ahab seemed willing to do as the prophet suggested. By now he probably had learned that if Elijah said it was going to rain it was going to rain.

But Elijah took no time to eat. Taking a servant with him, he went directly to Mt. Carmel. When he got almost to the top of the mount he threw himself upon the ground and put his face between his knees. He wanted to shut out the world so that, in prayer, he might wait upon the Lord. The Lord had given him the promise of rain; yes, by faith he had heard "a sound of abundance of rain", yet he was waiting for the rain itself. He would not stop short of the actual fulfillment of that promise.

After he had prayed for some time (it might have been the following morning) Elijah said to his servant, "Go to the ridge now, look toward the sea." Elijah needed not to tell the servant that he was to look for rain clouds over the Mediterranean Sea.

The servant went to the top of Mt. Carmel, he looked, but he returned saying, "There is nothing."

"Go again seven times," the prophet told his servant. The servant did not argue that such walking up and down the mountain would be fruitless effort.

It may be that he knew Elijah well enough to know that his "impossible" methods brought miraculous results.

When the servant returned after the seventh time he said, "Sir! There is a little cloud, the size of a man's hand, rising out of the sea now."

"Then hurry down to Ahab and tell him to get his chariot ready as quickly as possible, then drive, for the rain is coming and it may stop him if he fails to make haste," said Elijah.

Even while the servant was delivering the message the heavens were turning black and the wind began to blow. Ahab saw the rain coming. He did exactly as Elijah had said—he drove with all speed toward the city of Jezreel where his palace was located. The wind blew and rocked the chariot, and before the king reached the city the rain came in great sheets. It had come to pass exactly as Elijah had said.

But where was Elijah? This man of miracles spoke to his servant on Mt. Carmel, then he quickly gathered his garments, that were made of bulky material, and fastened them with his belt so they would not be hanging about his legs. He began to run. With miraculous strength and speed he ran until he came to the city of Jezreel—sixteen miles or more away! He reached that city before the king—the king, travelling in a chariot! He reached Jezreel before the rain began to fall and was secure and dry under a strong shelter when the storm struck in all its fury. As he looked out the window, he saw the king come into the city.

Elijah lingered in the city. There was no reason for haste now, he thought. But late that evening, just about sunset time, there came a messenger calling, "Elijah the prophet! Elijah the prophet!"

"Here am I," Elijah called to him as soon as he heard him. The messenger gave him a note, bowed, and departed, leaving the prophet alone to read it.

The letter was: "Elijah. Ahab has told me how you killed the prophets of Baal by the brook Kishon. So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not see to it that your life ends just as theirs did by about this time tomorrow. Queen Jezebel."

Elijah needed to read the message only once. He turned to his servant, who had caught up with him in the meantime, and said, "Come."

The two left the city together, they ran until they came to Beersheba, far beyond the borders of Ahab's rule for it belonged to the land of Judah . . . so great had been the prophet's fear of the merciless queen.

Beyond her reach, the two men stopped. They were in need of rest after the efforts of the past two or three days. The servant found a place to rest and was soon asleep. But Elijah was thinking. Why had the queen sent such a message to him? Could she not see for herself that the living God was The God? Was she not glad to see her land free from false prophets? Was she not glad to see the rain? Could she not now know that every word he had spoken had been true? The questions whirled in his tired mind. The more he wondered the greater grew the puzzle. He looked at his sleeping servant. "Let him rest.

I'm leaving for a while," Elijah said to someone there. Elijah left.

6.

Elijah left his servant and went "a day's journey" into the wilderness. It was not enough that he went to the edge of the wilderness . . . he went far enough so that he knew he would be alone.

Elijah had not slept for many hours, he had worked a good but strenuous work, and had covered many miles on foot. His body was weary, yes, exhausted. He had worked for the Lord and He had been faithful, yet the evil queen had refused to accept the proof against herself and had threatened to take his life. His mind was fatigued to the point where all looked hopeless to him.

A tired body and mind will cripple the spirit. Have we not all experienced times when small obstacles loomed like mountains, all because we lacked physical and mental strength to face them properly?

That was Elijah's trouble. He was too weary to remember that his God was just the same, that He was as able to save his life as He had been heretofore. He forgot how his God kept him by the brook and the birds fed him, and also how He kept him, the widow and her son alive. All he could remember now was that Queen Jezebel had threatened to take his life. That wicked piece of feminine humanity loomed so large before Elijah's vision that he could see nothing else!

Out in the wilderness, far from friends and enemies, he saw a large juniper tree. Its shade looked

inviting. He stopped, sat down under the tree and put his back against the strong trunk. It was cool there.

At last he thought of God. He prayed, "O Lord, let me die right here. I have had troubles enough for one person. They will kill me. But let me die here. I am no better than my fathers. They died, let me die, O Lord. There is no use that I live any longer. Let me die, let me die."

God in His great understanding mercy did not answer that prayer—neither then nor later, as we shall see before our little volume closes. God had other plans for His man of miracles, and He had more work for him to do.

Elijah stretched his tired body on the cool ground under that same evergreen tree. He fell asleep.

Sleep is a great healer and God Himself provided it for us. Elijah needed sleep but he also needed food. And the God Who has promised to all of us, "God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus", knew this need.

As Elijah slept, an angel touched him and said, "Arise and eat."

He opened his eyes and looked about him. There at his side was a little fire that had burned down to quiet red coals. He smelled bread baking, then noticed that on the coals was a pan of bread, baked, ready to eat. Close to him he found also a bottle of water. Elijah had not prayed for food, he had asked for death instead . . . yet God had provided. This was another miracle in the life of Elijah, a miracle in which his own asking had played no part. God

sent His own angel to prepare the food his body needed.

Elijah ate and drank. He felt strengthened but he was still weary. He stretched himself again on the ground, after he had eaten, and was soon asleep.

How long he slept we are not told: but the angel came again and prepared food and brought water for him. Again the angel touched him, saying, "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee."

Perhaps it had not entered the thinking of Elijah yet, but God and His angel knew that Elijah would go on a still longer journey. The future and all its needs are seen by our all-knowing God; therefore the angel had said, "The journey is too great for thee", when he set the food and drink before him.

Again Elijah awoke. Again he saw the food and water. Again he ate and drank. His full strength returned . . . strength enough for the next forty days and forty nights!

For forty days and forty nights he ate no more yet the food the angel prepared gave him strength that did not dwindle all those days. "Impossible", men would say. For men it would be impossible, but not for the God of Elijah, the God of the Impossible!

Elijah, after he had eaten, turned his face and his steps toward the south. Like a great magnet, something was drawing him away from Israel, drawing him gently but forcefully. On he walked until he came to the "mountain of God", at Horeb (in what is Arabia today). To the same "mount of God" where Moses saw the burning bush that was not consumed, to the mountain where God met with His people again and again—there Elijah went. He too was to meet God

there, but he knew it not. Elijah's spirit was still "under the juniper tree".

As the man of miracles walked across the many miles of desert, he remembered often the years when Moses and the children of Israel wandered over those same sandy miles. He remembered how God had provided food and water for so vast a company of people. He remembered most, however, how many there were then who served the true God "And now I am all alone to serve him," Elijah mumbled to himself.

He walked on, feeling very sorry for himself. He remembered that Moses had had a wife and sons—God had sent no such blessings into his life. Moses had had his brother and also his sister as fellow-workers—God had permitted him to stand entirely alone. With such somber gray meditations, he walked on until he found a cave. There he went in and made himself at home. There he might indulge his melancholy!

The Voice of the Lord came to him there in the cave, asking, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

"I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts," replied Elijah. "The children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, they have thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I, even I only, am left, and they are seeking my life also. They want to kill me also."

"Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord," came the command of the Lord. But it seems that Elijah was not quick to obey this time. His spirit was still "under the juniper tree".

While Elijah was still in the cave (probably the

same cave in which Moses was hidden when the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed His name) the Lord came to meet him. He sent a great wind, so great that huge pieces were blown from the mountain and rocks were blown together and crushed, "but the Lord was not in the wind". After the wind, God sent an earthquake that shook the mountain. Elijah felt it and feared that the ceiling of the cave would come down on his head, "but the Lord was not in the earthquake". After the earthquake, God sent a fire that raged in its fury, close to the mouth of the cave, "but the Lord was not in the fire". The wind, the quake, and the fire ceased. Then came a still small voice. Elijah knew that was the Voice of his God.

When Elijah heard it he wanted to hide his face. He reached for the bottom of his rough coat and pulled it up to his eyes as he walked toward the opening of the cave. As he stood with bowed head and covered face the Voice of God spoke to him.

"What doest thou here, Elijah?"

Elijah replied as before, but the self-pity had gone out of his voice. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts. The children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, they have thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I, even I only, am left, and they are seeking my life also."

God's Voice spoke again. "Go. Return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt

thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I will leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." Thus came the Voice of God to His man, Elijah.

7.

Living, throbbing faith returned to Elijah. His God was still the God of the Impossible! Now that One had given him some tasks to do.

His spirits crawled out from "under the juniper tree" and his body walked away from the cave. He turned his face and his steps toward the Promised Land again.

The words of the Lord kept repeating themselves in Elijah's mind. In reply to his own complaint that the followers of Baal were not being punished, God had let His prophet be assured of His faithfulness. "Be content, Elijah," He said by implication, "I will take care of everything in My good time. I have judgments prepared for the scorners, though they know it not now. When Hazael comes to be king of Syria, he shall make bloody work in the midst of the people and thus punish them for their idolatry. Jehu shall do the same with the royal family and shall utterly destroy the house of Ahab. But Elisha shall be given you for help and for strength to your work. He shall carry on when you leave."

Elijah was human, he needed to know these things.

This knowledge, and the truth that the Lord would reserve for Himself not one man but seven thousand all served to inspire him with God-like courage once more.

Elijah obeyed.

In the words spoken by the Lord, Elisha was named last but Elijah went first to him. It seems that Elijah understood, without being told definitely, what was the order of fulfillment; we know that later it was Elisha, not Elijah, who called the two kings.

Elijah seemed to have no trouble in finding Elisha as soon as he made the long journey back to the land of Israel. Perhaps he knew the younger man; perhaps the Lord led him and made Elisha known to him as He had brought Samuel and Saul together. (See "Samuel, A Man of Consecration" in this Series.) We know he found him.

He found Elisha, not in one of the schools of the prophets, not in the temple seeking to know the will of God, but found him in the field plowing . . . doing the task that was his that day.

Elisha's parents must have been people of at least moderate means. Elisha had eleven men working with him in the field that day, they each were plowing with a yoke of oxen, while Elisha himself was plowing with the twelfth. Had the land not belonged to his father he would not have hired the men. Had they not had much land they would not have needed so much hired help.

Elisha's heart must have been in tune with the Living God, or he would not have followed as readily as he did. God has His prepared men and He can fit

them into their right places with such ease and speed that the world merely wonders "How?"

Elijah found him following the plow. Without a word of greeting and without stopping, he took off his outer garment, his mantle, and put it on Elisha. It was a rough garment, void of all beauty, but Elisha knew the meaning of Elijah's act.

Elisha paused but an instant to let the full significance of the moment sink into his soul. Then he left the oxen on the spot and ran after the prophet. Elijah had not stopped.

Elisha quickly overtook him and said, "Let me first go and bid my father and mother farewell, I beg of you, then I will follow you."

Elijah must have been a bit disappointed; perhaps a bit like Jesus felt when the man asked Him to go bury his father and Jesus replied, "Let the dead bury their dead. Follow thou me." because Elijah replied, "Go back: for what have I done to you?"

Elisha returned, but he evidently did not take it as a rebuke for following because he prepared to leave his father's house.

In our day it is a bit hard to understand the doings of Elisha. The Word says, "And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him." It is altogether possible that the yoke of oxen were his personal property, as well as the instruments, or the machinery, as we would say. Perhaps Elisha had intended to be a farmer and, like

future farmers today, had bought this "start" for himself. When God called him, through Elijah, he wanted to rid himself of all connections that might bind him to the world—thus his attitude seems to have been. Therefore, we believe, he took the plow that was his and broke it into pieces ready to be burned. Then he called his parents and all his friends together, not only to bid them farewell, but that they might eat the sacrifice with him. He killed the oxen as unto the Lord, dressed them, then boiled the meat with the fire made from the broken plow. The record does not say that Elisha ate with the people but we know that they ate—it was Elisha's sacrifice. He had "left all" and now he was ready to go to Elijah and serve him wholeheartedly.

The Lord had given Elisha to Elijah.

8.

After Elisha was sent of the Lord "to be prophet in Elijah's room", Elijah leaves the pages of history for a time. Perhaps he thought his work was finished. Yet his public ministry had actually covered but very few days. It had been less than four years since the start of his work, and most of this time had been spent in exile at the brook where the ravens fed him, at the home of the widow, and then the self-inflicted exile down on the desert and in the cave on "the mountain of God".

Jesus Himself, many years later, gave us the exact time between Elijah's first and second meeting with the wicked king Ahab. He said (Luke 4:25) "But I

tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land . . ." Therefore, we know that it was three and one half years from the time he told the king it would not rain until the time he returned, proved to the people that the Living God was THE God, and prayed for rain which the Lord did send again. After that we know that he left the following day. If he spent a week "under the juniper tree", and forty days on the "mountain of the Lord", it probably was not more than two months until he cast his mantle upon Elisha. It had been less than four years since the start of his work.

We are apt to forget this because we remember only the greatness of his work and the wonder of the miracles that were accomplished. Elijah was too close to his own life to forget—he probably seemed like an utter failure to himself. He had time to remember others of God's chosen men and how they led the people for years—"And they follow me not at all, neither do the King and Queen turn from their ways to follow the Lord," Elijah thought within himself.

Yes, most men would be discouraged, yet Elijah did not think of turning away from following the Lord himself. His will was bent toward God; he obeyed Him.

Elijah is an example of one being given years of training for a very few days of service. From man's viewpoint that is waste of time, but God seems not to consider it so.

Indeed, if the life of Elijah did end with the act of anointing Elisha to fill his place, his life would have been rich, full, and decisive. To us he would still be the man of miracles. But his life did not end then. His work was not done.

Not so much as a hint is given us as to where Elijah spent the next silent years.

9.

We are made to wonder at times why some facts in the Bible are given in great detail while other facts that are seemingly more important are passed by with a mere mention. We wonder, yet we know that God makes no mistakes.

The circumstances that brought Elijah back on the scene might be summed up by merely saying that Ahab sinned again, yet the details furnish too fine an example of contrasts in character to pass over so lightly. These details are given very fully in God's Word.

King Ahab had never turned from walking in his wicked ways and his Queen had changed even less . . . both were greedy and selfish. Ahab admired a certain vineyard that was close to his palace. It belonged to a certain man named Naboth the Jezreelite so called because he lived in the city of Jezreel, and there his property was located. The king admired the vineyard and came to thinking that it would make a fine addition to his palace grounds.

Therefore, Ahab said to Naboth one day, "Sell me your vineyard. I want to turn it into a garden of

herbs since it joins to my palace grounds so conveniently. I will either give you another vineyard that is better, or I will pay you in money, whichever you choose."

It was a business-like request yet a foolish one because Ahab knew the laws of Israel, or should have. He knew that each man's land had been given to his father before him and it was not to change hands except under the most extreme circumstances. This exchange could not be caused by the mere whim of a king. The law of God forbade such a transaction and Naboth knew it. He said to the king, "The Lord forbid that I should let my vineyard go into other hands. I will not give the inheritance of my fathers over to you." Naboth was probably one of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, as mentioned by the Lord to Elijah.

The king had no respect for Naboth's honorable reply. Like a badly spoiled child, the king went home and went to bed because he couldn't have his own way. He was so unhappy that he refused to eat and lay with his face toward the wall feeling desperately sorry for himself.

Queen Jezebel came into his bedroom. When she saw him and knew that he had refused to eat, she asked, "What is the trouble? What made you so sad that you refuse to eat?"

"Because I spoke to Naboth about the vineyard that we have been wanting and he refused to sell it to me. I offered to either trade another vineyard or pay him in money yet he refused."

With sternness and reproof, Jezebel said, "Don't you rule the kingdom of Israel? Get up off that bed!

Eat. Make your heart merry. I'm going to see that you get the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite!"

She went to the king's desk and wrote letters to which she signed the king's name and she also used the king's seal in sealing them. These letters were written to every high official in the city of Jezreel. They were short but clear. She wrote: "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth up to be judged before the people. And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to witness against him saying, 'You have blasphemed God and the king.' Then carry him out, and stone him. He must die."

More wicked orders have probably never been given.

The fast was proclaimed—that it might appear to be a religious ceremony, a just act! The false witnesses told their lies. Naboth was given no chance to defend himself. He was carried out like an unwanted dog and stoned to death.

No, the king and queen were not there to witness the scene. Jezebel had written the letters in Ahab's name, and had even used his seal, yet it is interesting to note that when the heartless deed was done the officers sent word to Jezebel, not to Ahab, telling her, "Naboth is stoned, and is dead."

With a cold, cruel smile, Jezebel went to her husband who had not stirred himself too much to be merry as the queen had commanded. She said, "Alright now. Get busy and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. He refused to give it to you but he is dead now so he can refuse you no more. Get going."

So Naboth was dead! A dead man could do him no harm, thought Ahab; and he started toward the vineyard to look over the property he considered as his now.

He entered the vineyard, alright—but there Elijah came on the scene again.

Wherever it was that Elijah had been, there the Lord had spoken to him, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?' And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.'"

Where ever it was that Elijah had been, His word had come in time. Elijah was at the vineyard at the same time that Ahab was there. He gave the message that God had sent.

"Have you found me again, oh my enemy?" was all that Ahab seemed able to reply.

"I have found you because you have sold yourself to work evil in the sight of the Lord."

And Elijah, still speaking in the Spirit of God, continued, "Evil shall come upon you, your posterity shall be taken from you, the military strength of your kingdom shall be cut off entirely. Your posterity, your house, shall be as the house of King Jeroboam before you and like the house of Baasha because of all the sin you have committed, and because you have made Israel to sin against the Lord.

"And of Jezebel also did the Lord speak to me. He said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the ditch by the wall of Jezreel.'

"God spoke to me, saying, 'Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.'"

Those were words of stern judgment, but they were God's own words, therefore they were just.

It is interesting to notice that even before God tells us the outcome of Elijah's words, He takes two verses in His Word to mention the character of Ahab. These are his words:

"But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel."

A wicked man, Ahab was, yet he was weak. When he wanted the vineyard and Naboth refused his offers to trade or buy, Ahab acted like a spoiled child—he went to bed, turned his face to the wall, cried, and refused to eat. He would probably have forgotten the entire matter in a few days, or at least have dropped it. He was a king, to be sure, but he was not an adult, emotionally. This incident seems to be quite characteristic of Ahab.

Jezebel, his wife, was a stronger character. God tells us Himself that she stirred up Ahab. She was the one who did Ahab's thinking. She was determined and she was aggressive. Had she been a good woman she would have turned the whole nation

toward God as zealously as she turned them against Him. She was a leader with a compelling personality—she led and she compelled in the wrong direction.

In sharp contrast to these characters stands Elijah. Elijah was not a king, he had no wife to think for him or to stir him up. Things certainly did not go as he wanted but he did not go to bed and refuse to eat. True, he had had his "under the juniper tree" experience but even there he acted as if he were a tired adult instead of a spoiled child. Elijah was mature—with a maturity that had come from walking with God through both sunshine and shadow. We have no record of the early years of his life, and many of his later years too, but we can judge by his maturity that they were years spent under the direction of the Lord. Jezebel had strength—strength like cold steel that will snap under pressure. Elijah's strength was like it but was warm and alive—his strength would bend, but not break.

But let us return to Ahab. How did he react to the words spoken by Elijah given by the Lord? Did he go to bed, cry, and wait for Jezebel to tell him what to do? No. The best in Ahab came to the front. He saw the errors of his way, he was genuinely sorry for his sins. He repented in the manner and custom of that day, he "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly".

God saw him—our God of mercy. He spoke to Elijah, "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me?"

And Elijah replied, "Yes, Lord."

God continued, "Because he humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

But Jezebel remained as proud and as stiff as ever. All that Elijah had said concerning her destined end came to pass in the process of time.

Another great act in the life of Elijah, a man of miracles, was finished. This time he had been sent of God to rebuke an individual, not the entire nation of Israel.

Again Elijah vanishes from the pages of sacred history.

10.

Again we do not know where Elijah spent the time of which sacred history makes no mention. Dr. Milligan wrote, "Of the whole period of six years between the calling of Elisha and the meeting of Elijah and Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth, and again of the period of four years between the latter date and the bringing down of fire from heaven upon the companies of Ahaziah, we know, so far as concerns Elijah, absolutely nothing."

Perhaps we might modify that slightly, with all due respect to this fine student of the Word, by saying that we do know he walked with the Lord and also prepared Elisha for his work. It is possible that he sought out and encouraged the seven thousand who had not bowed their knees to Baal, nor defiled their lips with kissing him. We know he was "about his Father's business", whether in retirement or in activity.

For the nation of Israel, there followed three years of peace after Ahab repented of his sins in sackcloth and with fasting. But the spirit of greed sprang up again and he wanted to take the city of Ramoth in Gilead, saying that it belonged to the children of Israel.

Ahab sought out the prophets of the Lord, but not Elijah, and inquired of them whether he ought to go out to battle against Ramoth. At first he avoided the prophet Micaiah as definitely as he avoided Elijah, and when asked the reason for this he said that Micaiah always spoke evil concerning him. The other prophets encouraged him to go into the battle, telling him that he would take the city. At last Micaiah too was called. He spoke the same words, and more, for he is the one who tells us that the Lord Himself had put a lying spirit in the mouth of all the prophets in order to persuade Ahab to go into the battle.

Ahab disguised himself when he went into battle, yet a bow that had been drawn at a venture hit him at a joint of his armor and wounded him. His blood ran into the box of the chariot in which he was riding. The battle was lost. The king died. Someone washed his chariot in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood even as the Lord had said they would.

Ahab was dead: Ahaziah his son reigned in his place. Of Ahaziah the Word declares, "And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: for he served Baal, and worshipped him,

and provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done."

This describes the political and spiritual condition of the nation of Israel at that time . . . dark times for those who willed to walk with the God of Abraham.

It came to pass that after Ahaziah was made king, he was upstairs in his palace one day. For some reason unknown to us, he looked out of the window, leaned his weight against the lattice that covered the window, and found suddenly that the lattice would not hold him. He struggled to catch the window frame, missed and fell to the ground below.

The king was miserable after his fall and from day to day he grew no better. He began to wonder if he would recover. One day he called messengers to his bedside and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover from this accident."

Meanwhile, our God who neither slumbers nor sleeps, knew where Elijah the Tishbite was. God sent His angel to Elijah saying, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron?' Now therefore thus saith the Lord, 'Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.'"

Elijah asked no questions, he had no unfinished business to complete, he went at once to do the Lord's will. Where ever he had been when the Lord spoke, he was not far from the king's palace when his messengers started on their errand. He met them and

delivered the message from his Lord. Then Elijah went and sat down on the crest of a small hill where he could rest and also look out over the city and countryside. Again his work was finished for a short time.

But the messengers to whom Elijah had spoken turned back to the palace and went before the king again.

"Why have you returned?" asked the king from his bed.

"Oh King, there was a man who came to meet us when we left you. He said to us, 'Go, turn again to the king who has sent you on this errand and say to him, Thus saith the Lord, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.' Those were the words he spake, Oh King."

The king immediately asked, "What sort of a man was this which came up to you and told you these words?"

"He was a man dressed in rough clothing made of the skins of goats. His hair was long and shaggy so that he appeared to be an hairy man. He wore a leather belt about his waist."

That description was sufficient. They needed to tell him no more. The king said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

It is possible that Ahaziah had never seen Elijah in person but he had heard enough concerning him and his prophecies to be able to identify him instantly.

"Send to me a captain with his fifty soldiers," the

king commanded. The captain and his men came.

"Go," the king said to the captain, "Find the prophet Elijah and command him to come here to me at once."

The soldiers went. They found the man of God sitting on the small hill. Elijah had seen them coming and knew their errand before it was told him but he let the captain give his orders, "Man of God, the king sent this message to you. You are to come to him now."

Elijah did not stir from his place on the hill. "If I am a man of God, as you say, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." Fire came down from heaven. The captain and his fifty men were completely consumed.

There was not one left to run to the king with the news, as was true with the servants of Job many years earlier. All fifty-one men were burned on the spot. Yet somehow the news got back to the king. He ordered another captain and the fifty men under him to go to the spot and bring the man of God to his bedside.

These soldiers went. They found Elijah and approached him with the words, "O man of God, the king sent these words, 'Come down quickly'."

But Elijah was in no hurry, he had walked with God long enough to have learned the secret of His ease.

When he spoke Elijah said, "If I am a man of God, as you say, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men."

Just as before, fire came down from heaven. The captain and his fifty men were completely consumed.

By this time there were probably plenty watchers around the bend of the hill and plenty messengers to run to the king to tell him now he had lost two captains and one hundred soldiers—all completely burned by fire that came down from heaven. We know not what the king said or thought but surely fear had come upon him and now his desire was very great to see this man of God.

The king sent still another captain and his fifty men with him. Perhaps the change in the king's attitude was reflected in the attitude of the captain. As he, the third captain, came close to Elijah, who was still sitting on the same little hill, he did not stand and speak his orders as the other two had done. He approached with awe, he dropped to his knees in humility before Elijah. The soldiers came not close, but they bowed their heads as their captain went near to Elijah.

The captain pleadingly asked, "O man of God, I beg of you, won't you spare my life and the lives of these fifty men? Please let our lives be precious in your sight. We know that fire came down from heaven and burned up the other two captains and the two groups of fifty men that were with them. We know that, therefore, I beg of you, spare our lives."

While the captain knelt before the prophet, the angel of the Lord came and spoke to him saying, "Go down with him; be not afraid of him." Elijah obeyed.

Elijah said to the captain, "Very well, let us go to the king."

Relief and exceedingly great joy lighted the faces of the captain and the fifty soldiers who feared they would meet the fate of the first two groups. It was

a pleasure to escort the man of God down the hillside and on into the palace.

Elijah did not ask for new robes to wear when he went to stand before the king. Clad in his rough garments and his leather belt, he walked into the royal bedroom and stood before the ruler with ease and grace—not the polished manners of the royal court, but with the calm, quiet grace that comes to the members of The Royal Family, the children of God, who learn to walk in quietness and faith with HIM.

There was no ado. Elijah said to the king, "The Lord has sent this message to you: Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of His word? Therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." And Elijah departed.

King Ahaziah died.

11.

Elijah left the king's house and again went into retirement, at least as far as known facts are concerned. Except for the few days spent delivering the messages of the Lord, his whole life had been one of retirement and silence. In many respects it had been a lonely life, a life void of human companionship.

But one day the Lord told him that He was going to take him to be with Himself. He told him that he would not die, but like Enoch, he would be carried away bodily by a whirlwind into heaven. God did not tell him the exact time that this would come to pass.

We can be sure Elijah rejoiced. However, he kept right on doing the work of the Lord, going here and there as the Lord commanded him.

We know not how much time Elisha had spent with the elder prophet after the day his mantle fell upon him, but they seem to have been in perfect accord, and they were together when Elijah was about to leave this earth.

It seems that the two men had met at Gilgal. This was probably not the Gilgal of Joshua's fame, but another town that had been given the same name; probably it was close to Bethel and to Jericho. It was probably situated at a higher altitude than Bethel, since as we shall see, they spoke of "going down to Bethel" when it was unlikely to have been in a southerly direction.

It is very evident that Elisha also knew that Elijah would soon be taken from him. After they had started away from Gilgal the Lord spoke to Elijah. Elijah then turned to Elisha, saying, "Please wait here for me. The Lord has told me to go to Bethel. I will meet you here after I have finished the work He wants me to do there."

But Elisha refused to let the older man out of his sight. "As certainly as the Lord lives, and as sure as your soul is alive this moment, I will not leave you," said Elisha.

So the two men "went down to Bethel" together.

At Bethel they learned that the Lord had revealed to others also that Elijah was to be taken away. As soon as the "sons of the prophets that were at Bethel" had a chance to speak to Elisha alone they said to

him, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know. But please do not talk about it," was the young man's reply.

Elijah finished his work at Bethel—probably it was something regarding the school of the prophets that was located there. Seeing Elisha with the other young men of the place, he said, "I shall be glad to have you wait here if you would like, Elisha. The Lord has sent me to Jericho now but you need not go with me."

Again came the swift and certain reply, "As certainly as the Lord lives, and as sure as your soul is alive this moment, I will not leave you."

And they went to Jericho together.

As there was also a school of the prophets at Jericho, it is probable that Elijah's business took him to that place. Again the young men of the place watched their chance to ask Elisha secretly, "Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from you today?" They too had been told by the Lord.

Again Elisha said, "Yes, it has been told me; but please say nothing about it." He was feeling that loss that was to be his far too much to talk about it.

When Elijah had finished the business at hand, the Lord told him to go to the other side of the Jordan River—back to his native soil.

We do not know Elijah's exact reason but he again asked Elisha to stay where he was and told him that the Lord had told him to cross over the Jordan.

But Elisha's determination to follow him had strengthened each time more people let him know

that God had revealed His intentions to them also. With a note of finality in his voice, the young prophet said again, "As certainly as the Lord lives, and as sure as your soul is alive this moment, I will not leave you." And they went on their way together.

This time there were fifty men from the school of the prophets at Jericho who followed them secretly, men who were eager to see just how the Lord would take the beloved old prophet from this earth. They followed as far as the Jordan, no farther.

When Elijah and Elisha came to the Jordan, Elijah took his mantle and folded it together into a small bundle. Then he took it firmly in his right hand and struck the water with it, back and forth with a sweeping motion. The waters divided, they stood on the right hand and the left, while directly across the river-bed was a dry path for the two men to walk on.

We note with interest that Matthew Henry says, "The miraculous dividing of the Jordan was the preface to Elijah's translation into heavenly Canaan, as it had been to the entrance of Israel into the earthly Canaan. He must go on to the other side Jordan to be translated, because it was his native country, and that he might be near the place where Moses died. . . He and Elisha might have gone over Jordan by a ferry, as other passengers did, but God would magnify Elijah in his exit, as he did Joshua in his entrance, by the dividing of this river. As Moses with his rod divided the sea, so Elijah with his mantle divided Jordan, both being the insignia—the badges of their office."

Elijah and Elisha saw the water on either side, yet their eyes were on the dry path—the path that God had made for them. They climbed the eastern bank of the river, paused a moment, saw the waters fall back into their normal course with a mighty lunge, and then they walked on together.

12.

They walked in silence for a time. It was a moment too fraught with meaning for conversation. But at last Elijah said kindly, "Son, what will you ask that I shall do for you before I am taken away from you?"

With a love that made him want to be like the older man, Elisha said passionately, and as if inspired, "O I beg of you, let a double portion of your spirit be mine."

Elijah probably remembered the trials that had been his to endure, the times that ungodly people had tried to take his life, the endless days and nights he had spent alone; but quickly he remembered the joy of the Lord that had been his reward, the times He had talked with him as man to man, and the many miracles He had worked for him. "And now this young prophet has asked for a **double** portion of this spirit that has been mine from the Lord," thought Elijah. At last he spoke.

"Elisha, you have asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be granted you; but if not, you may not have your request."

It came to pass that as they were still walking together and talking together, suddenly there appeared a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire. Quick as a flash the heavenly conveyance parted the two men, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Elisha saw it! He stood as if transfixed for a moment. Then he saw something floating softly down to the ground. He looked; it was the mantle of the man of God—it had been left for him when Elijah was translated!

At last Elisha found his voice. "My father! My father! The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"

The words gave him some relief. He took off the coat he had been wearing and tore it in two, attempting to give vent to the emotions that were still pent up within his very soul.

Elijah was gone up to heaven. Like Enoch before him, he had not tasted death—he had been carried away bodily into heaven. Elisha had seen him go. His unusual request would be granted.

Elijah did not die.

Many years later, while Jesus Christ was here in the flesh, He took His three intimate disciples, John, Peter, and James, and went up into the mountains to be alone with them for prayer. There, as He prayed, the Son of God was transfigured before them. The three disciples saw the face of Jesus shining with heaven's own light, then they saw Elijah and Moses join Him. They **knew** Elijah and Moses though they had never seen those saints before. They saw Jesus talking with them.

Elijah is not dead today.

Elijah lives! The quiet little man, to whom God had entrusted such miraculous powers, lives! Someone has said that quiet hearts are as rare as radium. How true in the case of Elijah.

The God of Elijah lives today! The God who said "With me nothing shall be impossible", is as much alive today as when Elijah talked with Him. He is still the God of the Impossible, nothing is too hard for Him . . . even **today**.

End