

Christ in Prophecy
“Profiles 2: Profiles in Righteousness: Elijah”

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Dr. Reagan: Welcome to the spectacular city of Haifa in the nation of Israel. This city is not mentioned in the Bible because it did not exist in Bible times. But the mountain I am standing on is mentioned many times, it is Mount Carmel. We have come here to study the life of the prophet Elijah, one of the most interesting persons in the Bible. He was a bold and fearless prophet who never died and whose ministry is yet to be finished in the future. For a fascinating glimpse of this man’s life and message, stay tuned.

Welcome to Christ in Prophecy, I greet you in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope. Let’s begin our study of the prophet Elijah with an introduction to the city of Haifa. Haifa is located on the Mediterranean Sea coast about 65 miles north of Tel Aviv. With a population of almost 300,000, Haifa is the third largest city in the country, after Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. It is located at the north end of the Mount Carmel mountain range that runs for almost 30 miles southeast of here, separating the coastal plain of Sharon from the Valley of Jezreel, or, as it is known to Christians, the Valley of Armageddon.

Haifa is Israel’s major industrial center. It is the location of one of the nation’s two oil refineries, and it is the home of many high-tech companies like Intel, IBM, Microsoft, and Motorola. It is also one of Israel’s two modern ports, the other being Ashdod to the south of here. The gold domed building located here on the side of Mount Carmel is the tomb of the founder of the Bahai Faith, an eclectic religion that was founded in Iran. Its headquarters were moved here in the 20th century due to persecution in Iran.

The reason we have come here to Haifa is that this is the area where the prophet Elijah carried on his ministry. In fact, almost directly below us, at the base of this mountain, is an ancient cave that is considered to be the place where Elijah lived and taught. Let’s take a look at it.

Elijah, whose name means, My God is Jehovah, appears suddenly in the Scriptures in First Kings chapter 17. All that is said about him is that he was a “Tishbite from the land

of Gilead.” Now the term, Tishbite, is believed to refer to his hometown, probably named Tishbe, its location is unknown. Gilead is an area to the east of here, across the Jordan River in the modern day nation of Jordan. In Biblical times, it was part of the land that was allotted to the tribe of Manasseh. Elijah came to this area for the purpose of confronting his king, a very evil man by the name of Ahab. But before we consider that confrontation, let’s take a look inside of Elijah’s Cave.

Keep in mind that when Solomon died, his kingdom divided into two parts, the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. The northern kingdom was the rebellious one. When Elijah appeared on the scene, that kingdom had existed 60 years and had experienced 7 kings, and all of them had been evil in the eyes of God. The most evil was Ahab. He had married a Canaanite woman named Jezebel, and she had led the king and his people into the worship of false gods like Baal and Asherah.

Baal was the god of rain and agriculture, Asherah was a fertility god who was considered to be the mother of Baal. Jezebel, who is one of the most evil women portrayed in the Bible, pushed these gods on Ahab to the point that she talked him into exiling the Levitical priests and killing the prophets of Jehovah. In short, Jezebel was determined to extinguish the worship of Jehovah by the ten Jewish tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel. To say the least, it was a dark, dark time in the history of that kingdom. The people were wallowing in idolatry and the prophets and priests of the true God, Jehovah, had either been killed or they were in hiding. It took a lot of courage for Elijah to suddenly appear as a prophet of God and confront King Ahab with his wickedness. But that’s exactly what Elijah did. He told Ahab he was going to show him who was the true God of Israel. He said he was going to call for a drought, that it would not rain for over three years. In fact, he said it would not rain again until he called for it to do so. And the drought began immediately. This was, of course, a direct challenge to Baal because he was considered to be the god of rain.

Three years later, Elijah confronted Ahab again, and Ahab called him, “the troubler of Israel.” Elijah’s response was again a very bold one he said, “I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and have followed the Baals.” Elijah then challenged the king to a test of their gods, and Ahab accepted the challenge. He sent 450 prophets of Baal and 400

prophets of Asherah to confront Elijah at a place south of here on top of Mount Carmel. Let's proceed to that place, and as we do so, here is Paul Wilbur presenting the song "Days of Elijah."

Okay, here we are back on the top of Mount Carmel at a site about 15 miles southeast of Haifa. It is a place that is called in Arabic, El Muhraqa, which means "the place of burning." This is the traditional site where Elijah had his confrontation with the prophets of Baal and Asherah. Now, before we discuss Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal, let's pause for a visit to the roof of the Carmelite monastery that is located here. I want to tell you something, it provides a scenic view that is absolutely breathtaking. Let's go guys.

From this rooftop you can get one of the best views in all the land of the Valley of Jezreel or as it is called in the book of Revelation, the Valley of Armageddon. Well, here it is the Valley of Armageddon. When Napoleon saw this valley in 1799, he declared in amazement that "all the armies of the world could maneuver their forces on this vast plain." He proceeded to defeat the Ottoman armies in a battle here. The Valley stretches for 30 miles from the Haifa area southeast across the northern part of Israel to the Jordan River. In the center of the valley is a domed shaped hill called Mount Tabor. It is the traditional Catholic site of the Transfiguration. I don't personally believe the Transfiguration took place on Mount Tabor for a number of reasons, the most important being that there was a Roman fortress located on top of the mount in the time of Jesus.

But there is one event we know for sure took place there and that was a great Israelite victory over the Canaanites during the period of the Judges. You see, Mount Tabor was where the battle took place in which the army of Israel was led by Deborah and Barak. Let's head for this grove of trees over here. And as we're going let me show you a statue that's very interesting. This is a statue of Elijah killing the prophets of Baal.

Okay, I think we are ready now to recount the story of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of the false gods of Jezebel. And to do that for us, I want to invite one of our crew members to step in here and tell us the story. Come on in here, Don. Now those of you who are regular viewers of our program know this man. This is Don McGee, founder

and director of Crown and Sickle Ministries which is located in Amite, Louisiana. Don we are glad to have you with us.

Don McGee: It's good to be here.

Dr. Reagan: And we appreciate your work on the crew and I want you to tell us what happened in this location, okay?

Don McGee: Thank you. The account of Elijah and his confrontation with the prophets of Baal is found in 1st kings chapter 18 and it's one of my favorite accounts in the whole Bible. One of the reasons I really enjoy reading and studying the account of Elijah is the way that he conquered the enemies of God by the power of the Spirit of God working within him. And that's an application for us even today, something that we'll talk about in just a little while. One of the major things that we see as we begin the story is how he confronts the pagan king Ahab. And folks, this is something that we see very little of today there is very little confrontation with evil. But Elijah had no problems, no qualms whatsoever about going to Ahab and pointing his bony finger in his face and saying, "You are the problem, Ahab, it's not me! The fact that there's no rain on the face of the earth is not my problem. God has withheld rain because of your choices and your decisions and the leadership posture that you have with our people."

Well, Elijah challenges Ahab to a contest and the interesting thing is that Ahab actually took him up on the challenge. Elijah tells him, he says, "We're gonna finish this thing. You get your prophets of Baal, and you get your prophets of Asherah and we're gonna go to Mount Carmel and we're gonna see who's God." So, I don't understand what Ahab was thinking at this time, Ahab was a pagan king and he had to know at least to some degree that the worship of Baal and the worship of Baal's consort Asherah was all hogwash. There wasn't anything to it, and yet he took up the challenge.

Now folks, this is interesting because it tells us the depth of deception that Ahab was living in. Did he believe that he could really win this contest? And I think that the key thought when we examine this is that Ahab was deceived. Now notice the great question in chapter eighteen and verse twenty one. Elijah approached the people and said, "How long are you going to hesitate between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow Him; but

if Baal is god, follow him.” And it says that the people didn’t answer him a word. This is indicative that the people were so steeped in paganism that there was really no conviction in their heart about the God of their forefathers. So they said, okay this is something that we’re going to want to watch, and Elijah made the challenge. He threw down the gauntlet and he actually told them in verse 25 that you pagans get the first shot. And this is what they did. He said, “Bring us two bulls, I’m gonna take one and I’m going to offer the sacrifice, and you take one and you offer your sacrifice, and whichever God sends fire to consume the sacrifice, he is God.”

Now you have to understand, there were a lot people standing out there watching this thing. They were aware of Ahab and Jezebel and the corruption that was in their administration. They knew a little bit about this raggedy looking old prophet that suddenly appeared on the scene, but they didn’t know a whole lot about him. So they’re interested in what is going to happen here, because the result of this confrontation would set a spiritual posture in their nation.

Well, what happened? Elijah did three things. First thing that he did is that he told the people, told the prophets of Baal and Asherah, you go ahead and start your operation, and they did. The Bible said that they went through all kinds of incantations. He said, “Since you’re so numerous, choose for yourself one bull and prepare it first.” And they took the bull and they started their little raving. It says they screamed from morning until noon, “Baal answer us!” and the recorder says there was no sound, no one answered. And it says that they did their lame dance around the alter they had made. That was the first thing Elijah did. He gave them their shot, and they went from morning until noon and nothing happened. Then he removed all doubt about deception in his own sacrifice. He said about the time of the evening sacrifice, about 3 o’ clock, he said, “Okay guys you’ve had your turn. It’s my turn.” And he took some stones and he rebuilt this alter that had been there evidently for some time, and he piled them up again and he took some wood and he put it on the alter, and then he took his bull and he sacrificed it, he killed it, and he put it on the alter, and then he told them, pour water on this thing. And the reason he did that is he wanted to remove all question about the integrity of what he was going to do. And they poured water all over the sacrifice. And then the third thing he did is that he ordered a simple prayer. Notice the simple prayer that he prayed, he said, “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Let it be known today that you are God in Israel and I am

your servant and at your word, I have said these things. Answer me, Lord. Answer me so that these people will know that you, Yahweh, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.” And the Bible says that God sent fire from heaven. Actually this is the first example of a nuclear strike that we have the history of humanity, because he sent fire from heaven, and not only did it consume the sacrifice, but it consumed the sacrifice, it consumed wood, and folks, only a nuclear reaction can consume stone and dust. It took care of everything. God just didn’t say “I am God.” He said, “I’m God and you better not forget it”. This is what he did with this magnificent demonstration of his power. Not only did this demonstrate that Yahweh was God, but it demonstrated that Elijah was His spokesman. I pray God’s blessings upon us as we study this story and renew our faith.

Dr. Reagan: Hey Don that was a great presentation of that story, I want to thank you for that. I felt like I was right there cheering for Elijah!

Don McGee: Thank you very much.

Dr. Reagan: Thank you. Well folks, all we want to do now is just take a moment to apply that story to our lives today, and I’d like to do that by having another of our crew members, Nathan Jones, make some applications for us. Nathan is the newest member of our staff, he is our Web Minister. Nathan, what do you see is the application of the story of Elijah to say, the nation or to the church today?

Nathan Jones: Certainly, well, Elijah clearly proved that God exists to the people of that time. And God clearly proves that He exists to the people of this time through the Bible - His Word - through the complexity of creation, and from the lives that are changed when they give their lives to Him and ask for salvation. So today, we need to take that evidence and act on that, and believe. As a nation we need to turn to the Lord and say, “Hey, He exists!” We need to repent and ask Jesus to be our Savior and Lord of lives.

Personally, I think we need to shore up our faith in the fact that God does exist. We get a little timid thinking, “Well it’s been 2000 years, is He still around anymore?” He does, he exists and we can stand on that. As a Church we need to not let false doctrine into the Church. We need to say, “Hey, we need to be as brave as Elijah!” and confront it for

falseness outside, false religions - Allah, Buddha, Krishna - we need to say, "Hey you all are wrong, you are false, this is the Lord and Savior."

Dr. Reagan: Boy I'd say amen to that because I think one of the biggest problems in the church today is that the church has been invaded by the world's attitude of tolerance. And just tolerate anything and everything and Elijah wouldn't have been popular today.

Nathan Jones: Not at all. And if these people wait just a little while longer, Jesus is coming back and that's pure evidence right there.

Dr. Reagan: Now you get me preaching on that okay. Well Don what do you see as the application of this story?

Don McGee: Nathan made an outstanding application in that I believe we need a lot of Elijahs and Amos' today. I like those two guys.

Dr. Reagan: You like Elijah and Amos!

Don McGee: Yes I do. Because I think we need to confront evil. But you know there's something else in this story that sometimes hides in the background. And we don't really think about it as preachers so much because we like giving the action to people, we like to talk about the fire and the sacrifices and all that. But what we see, almost a subtle way in the back ground, is the people, notice their attitude. They said to themselves, you know we really don't know if Yahweh is God, and we're really not convinced that Baal is God, so we're gonna watch this contest and we're going to see. That is so descriptive of the spiritual mindsets of people today, and I'm not talking about the pagans and the heathens. I'm talking about people who warm a few square inches of pew cushion every Sunday morning.

Dr. Reagan: Well, yes, I would say that's true. And I love the way Elijah really makes the application of his message so simple. He just simply says hey, if you're God is Yahweh, chose Yahweh, if it is Baal chose Baal, but you have got to make a choice, and in the world today, people want everything. Well there are many different roads to God and there's the road of Buddhism and the road of Hinduism and the road of Judaism and so

forth, and so many different roads. But Jesus said, "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. There's no other way to God except by me." And people need to make a choice. Peter Marshall gave one of the greatest sermons I've ever heard in my life.

Don McGee: You weren't there.

Dr. Reagan: No, I wasn't there, but I heard it on a tape. And it was about this, and he got to the end and he said, "I say to you, the message of Elijah is this: if you're God be Yahweh choose Yahweh, if you're god be Baal choose Baal and go to hell! And I thought boy, he preaches like Amos! Well, tell us something else that this impacted you with, maybe for our society as a whole, I don't know, anything that comes to mind?"

Nathan Jones: I think for our society, everyone talks philosophy, oh, what is the meaning of life? Why do I exist? What is my future? The Bible answers all those questions. We don't have to sit around scratching our heads - God exists! He has a future for us. He has a plan for us. He has an eternity prepared for us in love. I mean everything that we search for. But we get scared as a people and a society, we want to find it in another way so we can continue to sin. And unfortunately when you make the decision for God you have to give that up, but you get so much more in return.

Dr. Reagan: Amen. Well folks, I think those are some very good applications for both our society and the church and I'd like to end with something on a little lighter note because this has been pretty heavy. And the lighter note is this. About a year ago, we had a special edition of our magazine on Elijah and his confrontation with the prophets, and a lady called me and she said, "I am the teacher of a youth class, young children, and I really appreciated your story, it helped me to tell them the story of Elijah, so I appreciate your magazine, but I want to tell you something funny that happened." She said, "After I got through with the whole story, I turned to the children and I said, 'now, who knows why Elijah put all that water on his sacrifice? The prophets of Baal didn't do that, why did he put so much water on there?' and she said a little girl's hand shot up immediately and said "it was for the gravy!"

As we conclude this program, I want to remind you that the ministry of Elijah is not finished. The Old Testament ends with a prophecy that Elijah will return to this earth

before the Day of the Lord, that is, before the Second Coming of Jesus. I believe Elijah will be one of the two great witnesses which the book of Revelation says will be sent by God to call the world to repentance during the first three and a half years of the Tribulation. Bible prophecy experts generally agree that Elijah will be one of those witnesses. They disagree over the identity of the second witness. Some argue he will be Moses because he performs miracles similar to those of Moses. Also, Moses and Elijah were the ones who appeared at the Transfiguration of Jesus. The second witness could very well be Moses, but I think it is more likely that he will be Enoch. Both Enoch and Elijah were raptured to Heaven without experiencing death. Both were prophets. But there was a difference between them. Enoch was a Gentile. Elijah was a Jew. And it seems appropriate to me that the Lord would supply both Gentile and Jewish voices to call the world to repentance during the Great Tribulation.

Elijah had a great ministry during Old Testament times. His ministry continues today because his message is so relevant to our day and time. But his greatest ministry is still in the future when he will return to help prepare the way for the Second Coming of the Messiah. His message then will be the same as it was in Old Testament times, the same as it is today. The Scriptures say, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If Jehovah is God, follow Him; but if Baal is god, follow him." A choice must be made, for there is only one road to the one and only true God. Jesus put it this way. He said: "I am the Way, I am the Truth, I am the Life; no one comes to the Father but through me." Put aside the false gods of your life. Embrace Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and He will lead you into a personal relationship with the one and only true God.

Well, that's our program for this week. Next week, the Lord willing, we will take a look at another profile in righteousness, namely, King David. Until then this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful for our redemption is drawing near!"

End of Program