

# PERTH BIBLE CLASS

## DEPRESSED SERVANTS – STUDY 2

### ELIJAH – 1 Kings 19

The historical record of the life of Elijah is contained in 1 & 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. There is a further reference to Elijah but the setting is prophetic and this is found in Malachi. Note that there is another Elijah recorded in the book of Ezra but he must be a different person. In the New Testament there are references to Elias (the Greek form of Elijah) in six books. All four gospels, Romans and James. The references in Romans and James link to the passage we are considering in I Kings 17 – 19. The references in the gospels deal mainly with the service of John Baptist, the transfiguration on the mount and the death of the Lord Jesus at Calvary.

**Background** – The nation of Israel had been divided into 10 tribes who retained the name Israel and two who were called Judah. Elijah comes onto the scene in 1 Kings 17 with a ministry to Israel. The King at the time was Ahab but prior to his reign the nation was already well away from the things of God. Ahab's predecessor was a man named Omri and his record is "Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord and did worse than all that were before him" 1 Kings 16 v 25. To add to this reign of departure we then read "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him" 16 v 30. Elijah's ministry was very much associated with the discipline of God so a famine is the result of Elijah's prayer. Both Luke in his gospel and James tell us that this drought lasted three and a half years. During this time Elijah knew wondrously the provision and protection of God. Provision firstly from ravens who brought him food 17 v 3 – 7, and then a widow woman v 8 – 16. Protection from King Ahab who had sought him throughout all the land ch 18 v 10. He also clearly demonstrated that he had power from God by raising the widow's son who died ch 17 v 17 – 24. This power would be further demonstrated throughout ch 18 when he will face down 850 false prophets v 19, call down fire from God to consume the sacrifice v 37 – 38, lift the time of famine with the little cloud v 44 and outrun the King's chariot v 46. Could such a mighty man of God ever face a time of depression so deep that he would wish to die?

**1 Kings 19** – our chapter opens with Ahab telling his wife Jezebel "all that Elijah had done and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword" v 1. This woman was so evil that she could not see that the man who had called down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice and with power over all the false prophets that Jezebel had been responsible for introducing to the nation was a man who was in touch with a God that could hear and respond.

v 2. **Jezebel's rage** – she vows to take Elijah's life. Those who have and do stand for God will often feel the rage of those who are opposed to the things of God. We read of Joseph's brethren "they hated him" Gen 37 v 8. When the

Lord Jesus preached in Nazareth in Luke 4 v 28 and 29 we read “they ---- were filled with wrath and rose up and thrust him out of the city and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built that they might cast him down headlong”. It is clear from reading the Acts that early Christians who stood for God were persecuted and felt the rage of those who were opposed to the message they preached. Perhaps the man who felt it most wrote “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” 11 Tim 3 v 12.

v 3. **Elijah’s response** – “he arose and went for his life”. How sad to read this of this great servant of God. The power and protection that had been so evident in previous chapters seems to mean nothing to him now. We note in earlier times how often he was guided by “the word of the Lord” 17 v 2 v 5 v 8 v 16 v 24 and 18 v 1. Now he does not enquire or receive any instruction from God and moves at his own impulse. He flees Israel and comes to Judah. Leaving his servant at Beersheba he travels alone into the wilderness.

v 4. **Elijah’s request** – the man who had cried “hear me O Lord, hear me” 18 v 37 now prays “It is enough; now O Lord take away my life”. He had stood before the 850 prophets in ch 18 but here he loses his courage at the threat of Jezebel and prays to die.

v 6 – 8 **God’s resources** – lovely to note that the man who has given up is not given up by God. In the hostility of the wilderness he hears the voice “arise and eat” v 5 & v 7. His need was deep but God’s provision was deeper and what he is provided with will sustain him for 40 days as he journeys to Horeb a journey of some 200 miles.

v 9 – 18 **God’s revelation** – the man who had moved without the word of God at the beginning of the chapter now hears again “the word of the Lord came to him”. He is challenged “what doest thou here Elijah?” v 9 & v 13. Did an all knowing God not know? We often find in scripture that questions are asked not so that God can be better informed but rather to elicit a response from those questioned. Elijah begins by telling God how evil his people have been and how faithful he has been and the way his life has been threatened. Still failing to appreciate that God knew all this. There follows a great wind an earthquake and a fire but God was not in them then came a “still small voice” v 12.

Elijah is instructed “go return” v 15. The divine programme is revealed to him not only with regard to the continuance of the Kings in the nation but also with regard to the servant Elisha who will follow Elijah. God also reveals to his servant that although he thought “I even I only am left” v 10 & v 14 that within the nation God had “seven thousand in Israel all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him” v 18.

What a lesson for servants of God today who may often feel isolated in their service to be able to understand that God sees the bigger picture and clearly “knoweth them that are his” 11 Tim 2 v 19.