

The Prophet Elijah lived during the 9th century before Christ. He is remembered as one of Israel's most powerful prophets, who fearlessly confronted the idolatrous rule of King Ahab and his wife, Queen Jezebel (see 1 Kings 18:17-19). Elijah's mission was to call Israel back to the worship of the one true God, Yahweh.

The Bible does not mention Elijah having a wife or children, nor does it tell us how many years his ministry lasted. What we do know is that his life and ministry were filled with mighty works of God.

Among Elijah's most famous miracles was the dramatic moment on Mount Carmel when he called down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, proving that the Lord alone is God:

Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

(1 Kings 18:38, NIV)

Another extraordinary event was Elijah's departure from this world. He

did not experience death in the usual sense, but was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind, accompanied by a chariot and horses of fire:

As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.

(2 Kings 2:11, NIV)

The prophecy concerning Elijah's return is found in Malachi 4:5:

See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. (NIV)

This prophecy was partly fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist, who came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. As the angel declared to Zechariah about John:

And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

(Luke 1:17, NIV)

Jesus Himself confirmed this connection, saying of John:

And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

(Matthew 11:14, ESV)

However, many Bible scholars also see Malachi's prophecy pointing to Elijah's future role in God's plan before Christ's second coming, when the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" will occur.

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