

## Fact Sheet for "Ahab" 1 Kings 16:29-19:21

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09/25/2016

**ESV 16:29 ¶ In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years.<sup>30</sup> And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him.<sup>31</sup> And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him.<sup>32</sup> He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria.<sup>33</sup> And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.**

Then we come to a verse that almost seems out of place, but God was following up on an important detail.

**<sup>34</sup> In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.**

Almost 550 years earlier at Jericho Joshua gave this prophecy (Joshua 6:26).

**<sup>17:1</sup> ¶ Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."**

This would result in a severe famine in Israel. During the next 3½ years (James 5:17) when there was no rain in Israel the Bible records three supernatural occurrences in Elijah's life.

1 – He first went and hid himself by a brook. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening (1 Kings 17:2-7).

2 – He then went to the widow at Zarephath. She was expecting to use the last handful of her flour and what little oil she had left to bake bread for her and her son before they died. But during his stay there and until God sent rain, her jar of flour never was used up and her jug of oil never emptied (1 Kings 17:8-16).

3 – Then her son became severely ill and died. Elijah cried out to the Lord and her son came back to life (1 Kings 17:17-24).

**ESV 18:1 ¶ After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth."**

Ahab had sent Obadiah, who was over his household, to find grass for his animals. Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly. He had secretly hidden 100 prophets of the Lord and had provided for them. Elijah met him and a meeting between Elijah and Ahab was set. (1 Kings 18:2-16)

*(Pause to read 1 Kings 18:17-22.)*

Elijah's feelings were different than the truth. And Elijah would later twice repeat this same thought to God (1 Kings 19:10, 14). But God would there respond with a word that he was not alone (1 Kings 19:18).

**<sup>23</sup> Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it.<sup>24</sup> And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of**

the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God." And all the people answered, "It is well spoken."

If Elijah was setting up this contest without God directly behind it then he was taking an impossible risk! He now mocked the followers of Baal (read 1 Kings 18:25-29). Perhaps they expected Elijah to have the same result, but they were in for a surprise.

<sup>30</sup> ¶ Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down. <sup>31</sup> Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, "Israel shall be your name," <sup>32</sup> and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs of seed.

Two seahs of seed were about 3 gallons (NLT).

This reminds me of Joshua 4 when 12 stones were set up in the Jordan river bed where they crossed, and another 12 stones were set up as a memorial in Gilgal near Jericho.

<sup>33</sup> And he put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." <sup>34</sup> And he said, "Do it a second time." And they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time." And they did it a third time. <sup>35</sup> And the water ran around the altar and filled the trench also with water.

Any human hope of a fire was gone! Read how God responded in 1 Kings 18:36-38. This was as if God were putting three exclamation points on the statement that only He was God!!!

<sup>39</sup> And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God." <sup>40</sup> And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.

On Mount Carmel Elijah now bowed down seven times and asked his servant to look out over the Mediterranean Sea. On the seventh time Elijah's servant saw a small cloud that would later grow into a storm. Elijah then ran ahead of Ahab's chariot to Jezreel, something like 20 miles away (1 Kings 18:41-46). Elijah he was emotionally spent. And then Jezebel threatened his life. Elijah was afraid and fled, eventually ending up at Mt. Horeb (Mt. Sinai). There he expressed to God that only he was left and people were seeking his life. God would tell him to anoint Elisha to be prophet in his place, and inform him of 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:1-21).

There are three applications that jump right out of this passage to me.

### **1 – The Bible is the only place we reliably learn of God and His desires for us.**

Remember that one verse that seemed out of place (1 Kings 16:34)? God fulfilled a very specific prophecy spoken almost 550 years earlier by Joshua. The Bible is the only book in existence that has the perfect track record of specific, long-term, fulfilled prophecy like this.

### **2 – The God of the Bible is the only true God.**

In our day, when world politics have become so important, there is a thought we often hear voiced... "There are many ways to God." In other words it doesn't matter what your view of god is. All religions lead to salvation. This contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal puts the lie to this notion. Jesus echoes this same thought in His own words on the evening of the Last Supper (John 14:6).

### **3 – Our emotions can get the better of us, but be careful to rely on what is true.**

Elijah was no stranger to supernatural events, but even his depression overwhelmed him. We need to constantly remind ourselves of what we know to be true (such as John 3:16).