

**Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us**  
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,  
and shew my people their transgression,  
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

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# **Christmas**

## **Is This Pagan Festival Christian?**

### **Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully**

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## **1. You Can't Keep Both**

**Reading:**  
1 Kings Chapter 17

### **INTRODUCTION**

The last two verses of the Old Testament concern a prophecy about the **prophet Elijah**; whom God would send before the great and terrible **Day of the LORD**. In other words, before the **Time of Trouble** and before the Messiah appeared, Elijah would come. Here is the prophecy.

Malachi 4: 5: *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:*

*6: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."*

In this lesson we will consider part of this prophecy; that is, the man **Elijah**, his **message** and the **experiences** and **tests** which came to people associated with his **message**.

## **2. The Man Elijah**

Elijah means "My God is Yah." or "Yahweh is God."

**Question:**  
2 Kings 1: 7-8 What manner of man was Elijah?

**Answer:**  
Physically he was an extremely hardy and powerful man, capable of covering enormous distances on foot and enduring great hardship on limited resources. **Spiritually he was a faithful and obedient servant of the LORD God of Israel.** Though sometimes ill-tempered and capable of fierce retaliation, Elijah had a sense of humour. He wore a prophet's mantle and was clothed with a girdle of leather about his loins.

### **Elijah's Characteristics:**

- Fit/Hardy: 1 Kings 18: 46 He ran some 20 miles
- Short Tempered: 2 Kings 1:9-12

- Humorous: 1 Kings 18:26-29
  - Obedient/Courageous/Faithful: 1 Kings 19: 10-14
- Elijah was capable of taking Yahweh's message to Israel in a time of literal and spiritual drought. He was tireless, hardy and extremely obedient. He is a lesson to all believers, especially preachers. Perhaps there are times when you feel: '**I, only I, am left.**'

### 3. Background

#### Israel's Apostasy

I Kings 16: 29: *“And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began **Ahab** the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years.*

*30: **And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him.***

*31: And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife **Jezebel** the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and **served Baal, and worshipped him.***

*32: And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.*

*33: And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did **more** to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger **than all the kings of Israel that were before him.**”*

### 4. The Elijah Message

Elijah is known, not for his physical strengths or weaknesses, but for the **message** he preached. What was **Elijah's Message**? On its face value the prophecy in Malachi seems to imply that the man Elijah would come to earth **before the Messiah appeared at the great and dreadful Day of the LORD!** That's one reason why the Pharisees rejected the claim that Yeshua (Jesus) was the Messiah; because the man Elijah hadn't appeared. The disciples were **also confused** about the issue.

#### REINCARNATION:

**Jesus testified that John was Elijah. Did he mean John was the reincarnation of Elijah?**

Matthew 17: 10: *“And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that **Elias must first come?***

*11: And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.*

*12: But I say unto you, **That Elias is come already,** and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.*

*13: Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of **John the Baptist.**”*

**Was John, perhaps, a reincarnation of the prophet Elijah and didn't even know it?**

**John's testimony was: NO he was not Elijah. He was a Voice, (A MESSAGE) crying in the Wilderness.**

John 1: 19: *“And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?*

*20: And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.*

*21: And they asked him, What then? **Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.***

*22: Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?*

*23: He said, I am the **voice of one crying in the wilderness,** Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.”*

Both John and Jesus were correct. **John was NOT the literal Elijah. Nor was he a reincarnation of Elijah. Reincarnation is a pagan teaching. It has no scriptural support whatsoever.** When Jesus said that John was Elijah he meant that John was presenting the **Elijah Message**. Both Elijah and John presented the same message, the **Elijah Message!**

The question is: **What is the Elijah Message?**

The answer is: **The Elijah Message is a call to obedience;** a call to forsake paganism with its preoccupation with sexual sin. In short:

- Fear God and keep His commandments... (Ecc.12:13)
- Break off illegal associations with **Baalim**.

The first part of the **Elijah Message** is a call to obedience. It is calling people back to the **law of God**. The world is full of preachers preaching '**smooth things**:' soft words that tickle the ears of their audiences. '*We are no longer obliged to obey the law.*' they say. '*We are free from the law.*' '*It's done away with.*' '*It's obsolete.*' '*Didn't you know that we're under grace and not under the law?*' '*Only believe and don't worry about obedience!*'

These preachers are not the true and faithful servants of the Most High. They are false prophets leading multitudes to their deaths. The preachers Yahweh will use in these last days - just before His Son's return and the great and terrible Day of the LORD - will preach the **Elijah Message**. They will remind people of the need to keep the commandments; particularly the commandments which are being blatantly broken by millions. Let us read the Scriptural record of these facts.

### Keep the Commandments of Yahweh

- 1 Kings 18: 15: *“And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.*  
 16: *So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.*  
 17: *And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*  
 18: *And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that **ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed BAALIM.**”*

### Two serious sins

Notice that Elijah here pointed out two **extremely serious** sins:

1. **“Ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD.**
2. **And thou hast followed BAALIM.”**

The word **Baalim** is the Hebrew plural for **BAAL, the pagan god of nature and fertility**. I quote from the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible article '**BAAL**' (emphasis mine)

**“Baal worship** apparently had its origin in the belief that every tract of ground owed its productivity to a supernatural being, or baal, that dwelt there. The farmers probably thought that from the Baalim, or **fertility gods**, of various regions came the increase of crops, fruit and cattle. **The worship of Baal was accompanied with lascivious rites**, (1 Kings 14: 24) the sacrifice of children in the fire by parents, (Jeremiah 19: 5) and kissing the image. (1 Kings 19: 18; Hosea 13: 2) **Baal** was often associated with the goddess **Astoreth**, (Judges 2: 13) and in the vicinity of his altar there was often an **Asherah**.” (Judges 6: 30; 1 Kings 16: 32-33)

Of the goddess **ASTORETH** the same dictionary says:

**“She was the goddess of sexual love, maternity and fertility.** Prostitution as a religious rite in the service of this goddess under various names is widely attested. The identification of '**Ashtarot**' with '**Aphrodite**' is evidence of her sexual character. '**Ashtaroth**' (plural of Astoreth) In connection with the plural of Baal, a general designation for the female divinities of the Canaanites... '**Asherah**' refers to a wooden pole or mast which stood at Canaanite places of worship; (Exodus 34: 13) originally it was, perhaps, the trunk of a tree with branches chopped off, and was regarded as the wooden symbol of the goddess Asherah, who like Ashtoreth, was a type of fertility... It was erected beside the altar of Baal.” (See Judges 6: 25, 28)

We can see from these quotes that the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth incorporated **illegal sexual acts** and that the Asherah was nothing but a **phallic symbol**. Pagan sex festivals, like Easter and Christmas, should also be forsaken. For more details about Christianity's involvement with paganism see Sermon Note 197 entitled **Baal, The Pagan God of Fertility**.

### The Works of The Flesh

In New Testament terms, Baal worship is described as the '**works of the flesh.**' This means, sinful sexual and mental activity expressly forbidden in Yahweh's law: **Adultery, Fornication, Homosexuality, Incest** etc.

Galatians 5: 19: *“Now the **works of the flesh** are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication,*

*uncleanness, lasciviousness,  
20: Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,  
21: Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I  
have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of  
God.”*

## 5. Elijah's Challenge

**How long halt ye between two opinions?** (1 Kings 18: 21) In other words, ‘How long will you remain undecided about this matter of which God to worship and which commandments to keep?’ If **Yahweh is God**, obey Him, follow Him, keep His commandments, His Feasts. If **Baal** (sensual activity and the worship of Nature) is God, then go ahead and keep Baal's festivals: **Christmas, Easter** etc. You cannot keep both. Make up your mind. The **Elijah Message** demands a response. It cannot be ignored. **You have to make a decision, one way or the other.**

## 6. Turn the Hearts

Another aspect of the **Elijah Message** is the call to Yahweh's children to be reconciled to their parents and a call to parents to be reconciled and look to the welfare of their offspring.

**“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children,  
and the heart of the children to their fathers,  
lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”**

Wherever the **Elijah Message** is **preached** and **acted upon** it will manifest itself in happy homes and obedient families. Sad to say in this evil world **this call** is: **A Voice In The Wilderness** and it meets with **open ridicule, stony silence, or fearsome opposition.**

For fearlessly proclaiming the **Elijah Message** John the Baptist was beheaded!

Matthew 14: 1: *“At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,  
2: And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore  
mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.  
3: For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his  
brother Philip's wife.  
4: For John said unto him, **It is not lawful for thee to have her.**  
5: And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as  
a prophet.  
6: But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased  
Herod.  
7: Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.  
8: And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a  
charger.  
9: And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat,  
he commanded it to be given her.  
10: And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.  
11: And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her  
mother.”*

## 7. The End Time Message

What of the great and dreadful **Day of the LORD**? That day is even **at the doors!** And once again the **Elijah Message** is going forth. As in the case of John, those who preach the **Elijah Message are not reincarnations of the literal Elijah.** They are, however, **people with similar spiritual characteristics that Elijah and John the Baptist possessed: spiritual hardness, faithfulness, obedience and perseverance.** They will be preachers who will break with paganism and the festivals that glorify illicit sex. Alas! many of them will be beheaded by the **Antichrist** as John the Baptist was beheaded by king Herod. Others will be caught up by the angels as Elijah was; caught up - without seeing death - at the Saviour's return.

Revelation 20: 4: *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that **were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God,** and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”*

## 8. Elijah's Requirements

Associated with the Elijah experience are several interesting stories; each of which has great spiritual significance. Remember the Apostle Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 10: 11: *“Now **ALL** these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, **upon whom the ends of the world are come.**”*

### The Widow of Zeraphath

Our first story concerns the widow of Zeraphath.

1 Kings 17: 8: *“And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,  
9: Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.  
10: So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, **Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.**  
11: And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, **Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread** in thine hand.  
12: And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.  
13: And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: **but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.**”*

Elijah's requests, though reasonable to begin with (**a little water**) suddenly become extremely excessive - almost cruel. ( **But make me a little cake first...**) What, then, does this part of the Elijah drama symbolize? What does it mean to us who live in the closing days of earth's history? Where do we fit into this picture? Who does the widow woman picture? What has she to teach us? Possible answers are:

- Recognizing the **Elijah Message** as a message from God is the first step to **absolute commitment**; the sacrifice of what appears to be **everything!** Elijah was asking her to put him before her son and before herself. *'But make me thereof a little cake **first**, and bring it unto me, and **after** make for thee and for thy son.'*
- Do you believe that God can supply your needs when all your stores are virtually run out? Would you put the **Elijah Message** first at that time? Could you honestly say that I believe Elijah's Message, even when he said: *'For thus saith the **LORD God of Israel**, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail...'*
- The LORD is no man's debtor. Everything, however small or large we may give Him, is repaid a million-fold. In this story, food shortage, sickness and then death visited the widow's home. Her son became ill and died. The boy was then raised to life by Elijah. No greater evidence of God's power is given than the resurrection of the dead. **The Elijah Message raises people who are spiritually dead.** Those who believe, live out and preach the **Elijah Message** will call down the power of Yahweh to raise the spiritual dead.

### The Obadiah test

Obadiah feared the LORD greatly and he secretly sided with Elijah and his call to obedience. At great risk to himself he had hidden 100 prophets of God in caves and fed them with bread and water. He risked his life to do this.

1 Kings 18: 1: *“And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.  
2: And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria.  
3: And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. {Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly:  
4: For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an **hundred prophets**, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.}*

5: And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

6: So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7: And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?

8: And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, **Behold, Elijah is here.**

9: And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?

10: As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

11: And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, **Elijah is here.**

12: And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

13: Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how **I hid an hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?**

14: And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.”

### Fervent prayer ... seven times

- **Sprinkle the Blood:** Seven Times On The Altar, Veil, Vessels and Sinners etc. (See Leviticus 4 & Leviticus 14)
- **Sprinkle Oil:** Seven Times.
- **Chastize:** Seven Times.
- **Wash in Jordon:** Seven Times. (2 Kings 5) Elijah's servant **Elisha** had learned this lesson from his master.

1 Kings 18: 41: “And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for **there is a sound** of abundance of rain.

42: So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

43: And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, **Go again seven times.**

44: And it came to pass at the **seventh time**, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a **man's hand**. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

45: And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a **great rain**. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.”

James 5: 13: “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

14: Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

16: Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The **effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**

17: Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he **prayed earnestly** that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

18: And he **prayed again**, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”

Matthew 15: 32: “Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

33: And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

34: And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, **Seven, and a few little fishes.**

35: And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

36: And he took the **seven loaves** and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

37: And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left **seven baskets** full.

38: And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.”

### **I will not leave thee**

2 Kings 2: 4: “And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, **I will not leave thee.**”

Do you believe the **Elijah Message** to that extent? I can assure you that all who stay true to it will receive a double portion of the Holy Spirit - as did Elijah's servant the prophet **Elisha!**

**AMEN!**

**In the Son's Name - For the Father's glory.**

**Elder/Pastor: Max W. Mader**

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