

## The Lord has a Better Way

This painting is of Elijah the prophet at his darkest hour. This was during the reign of King Ahab who married Jezebel and adopted her belief in Baal and made it Israel's official religion. Jezebel had the prophets of the Lord killed or cast out and sponsored false prophets of Baal. Baal was the Canaanite god responsible for rain, thunder, and lightning. And yet, they were in a great famine and drought.

Elijah was the last remaining prophet of the Lord. With great faith and courage, he challenged 450 prophets of Baal and another 400 prophets of Baal's mother, Asherah, to call upon their gods to perform a miracle in front of the Israelites to prove to them that they were false prophets of false gods. He was one man against hundreds. While Elijah was able to call upon the Lord to bring down fire and rain, the hundreds of prophets of false gods could not perform the miracle. The false prophets were gathered and slain by the people.

After hearing what happened, Queen Jezebel was furious over the death of her prophets and humiliated that they failed to disprove Elijah. She threatened Elijah with death and Elijah fled into the desert. No doubt after an arduous escape, he was hungry, thirsty, hot, and fatigued. Elijah took rest under the shade of a juniper tree. Feeling alone and desperate, he didn't want to live anymore. He asked the Lord to let him die. "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." (1 Kgs 19:4). Although he had just conducted a huge miracle through the power of God, he was forced to flee and there were orders to take away his life. He expected things to change but now feared that all was for naught. Just like with Moses of old, he thought that the Israelites would return to idolatry. Distraught and exhausted, he fell asleep under the tree.

Elijah was awakened by an angel who had brought him bread and water and commanded him to eat. He did so and fell asleep again. The angel awakened him again and asked him to eat and drink so that he would have strength for his journey. The Lord did not rebuke Elijah for his weakness or for his desperation to be removed from his circumstances. Instead, the Lord responded gently with comfort and sustenance. He let Elijah know that he still had a purpose and that there was still more for him to do in his life.

Elijah was a great man and a great prophet, but he was not immune to depression, devastating feelings of failure, or bouts of crippling loneliness. In his darkest moments, he wanted to die. He cried out and was helped without judgment. He lived on to do many great things. The Lord had a better way.

**\*\*If you are someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts, please call The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, Press 1.**