

**On the 20th of July, the holy Church commemorates
the holy and glorious Prophet ELIAS the Thesbite,
and his fire-bearing ascent into heaven.¹**

Elias (Eliu, Elijah), the glorious prophet, hailed from the town of Thesbe² of Galaad (Gilead) by the Jordan. He was a scion of Aaron, the priestly tribe. When Elias was born, his father, named Sovak (Sobacha), beheld a vision. Men clad in white named the boy child Elias, that is, a name that bespoke "God" or "divine"—as Eli signifies in the Hebrew language

¹ Among the well-known encomia to the Prophet Elias there is that of Makarios Kofos in the *Neon Thesavron*. Saint John Chrysostom wrote two sermons. The text of one begins: "The assembly of the Jews formerly...." The text of the other begins: "The blessed and great prophet...." See *Patrologia Graeca*, Volume 50, page 725. Encomia may also be found at the Athonite Monasteries: Iveron; Pantocrator [Theophanes Protothronos]; and Vatopedi [fifth *Panygyrikon*]. There is also the composition of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, which is preserved at Rome in his Volume III.

Prophet Elias is also praised in the Wisdom of Seirach: "Then stood up Elias the prophet as fire, and his word burned like a lamp. He brought a sore famine upon them, and by his zeal he diminished their number. By the word of the Lord he shut up the heaven, and also three times brought down fire. O Elias, how wast thou honored in thy wondrous deeds! And who may glory like unto thee! O thou who didst raise up a dead man from death, and his soul from the place of the dead, by the word of the Most High; who broughtest kings to destruction, and honorable men from their bed; who heardest the rebuke of the Lord in Sinai, and in Horeb the judgment of vengeance; who anointedst kings to take revenge, and prophets to succeed after him; who wast taken up in a whirlwind of fire, and in a chariot of fiery horses; who wast ordained for reproofs in their times, to pacify the wrath of the Lord's judgment, before it broke forth into fury, and to turn the heart of the father unto the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob. Blessed are they that saw thee, and slept in love; for we shall surely live. Elias it was, who was covered with a whirlwind; and Elissaios was filled with his spirit [Eccl. 48:1-12]."

Divine offices to this holy prophet were composed by Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite. A Supplicatory Canon, written by the hymnographer Father Gerasimos Mikrayiannanites of the Great Church, was published by Archimandrite Anthony Tsingas. Double Orthros Canons in the Greek *Menaion* for the day include the works of the holy hymnographers John the Monk (Mode Two) and Joseph (Mode Plagal Four).

² Thesbe or Thesbon is variously recorded. Josephus [*Ant.* 8.13.2 § 319] has Thesbones (variant Thessebones). Thesba is given by Eusebius [*Onomastikon* (Klostermann, ed., p. 102)]. The existence of this town in the Roman-Byzantine period and its association with Prophet Elias are confirmed by the 5th-C. testimony of Egeria [H. Petre, "Etherie," *Journal de voyage*, SC 21 (Paris, 1948), pp. 154 ff.]. She wrote: "Suddenly we saw the city of the holy Prophet Elias, that is, Thesbe." Her report suggests that the town was visible from the Jordan valley.

"God." Those with shining appearance not only wrapped the infant in swaddling cloths of fire but also fed him flames of fire. He was in no wise seared. Sovak repaired to Jerusalem in order to take counsel with the priests what was revealed to him. Filled with the prophetic Spirit, they disclosed the following revelation to him: "Cease fearing, O man, the dwelling place of thy child is light. His is the word of decision. His life is according to the Lord. His zeal shall appear pleasing to God. He shall judge Israel by fire and dagger (sword)."³ Thus, it came to pass, Elias prophesied for twenty-five years.⁴ His life is recorded in the Books of Third and Fourth Kings (Kingdoms) of the Septuagint.

His great mission was to return his apostate people back to God. While the other prophets give a detailed genealogy, Elias' name appears boldly in the Old Testament, like Melchisedek, without any mention of father or mother. Our account opens during the reign of Achaab (874 B.C.-853 B.C.), king of the ten northern tribes of Israel, who began his reign in the second year of King Josaphat (Jehoshaphat) of Juda (872 B.C.- 847 B.C.).⁵

Achaab (Ahab), son of Ambri, reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. Achaab did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. In fact, he did more wickedly than all that were before him. It was not enough for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nabat, but Achaab took to wife, Jezebel (Jezabel) the daughter of Jethebaal (Ethbaal) king of the Sidonians. Achaab, consequently, went and served Baal, and even worshipped him. Achaab set up an altar to Baal, in the house of his abominations, which he built in Samaria. Achaab also made a grove. He did yet more abominably, to provoke the Lord God of Israel, and to sin against his own life so that he should be destroyed. Indeed, as it is written: "He did evil above all the kings of Israel that were



Prophet Elias

³ Short sword (μάχαιρα).

⁴ *The Great Synaxaristes* (in Greek), 5th ed., s.v. "July 20."

⁵ 3 Kgs. LXX (1 Kgs. KJV) 16:29.

before him.”⁶ Saint Andrew of Crete cites this king as a standard of evil in his *Great Canon*, remarking: “Alas, my soul! Thou hast rivaled Achaab in guilt. Thou hast become a dwelling place of fleshly defilements and a shameful



*The Cave-Church of Prophet Elias
at the Monastery of Saint George of Chozeva*

vessel of the passions. But groan from the depths of thy heart, and confess thy sins to God.”⁷

3 Kings, Chapter 17 Prophet Elias at the Brook of Chorrath

Holy Elias the prophet, the Thesbite of Thesbae of Galaad, said to Achaab, “As the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, lives, before Whom I

stand, there shall not be these years dew nor rain, except by the word of my mouth.” And the word of the Lord came to Elias, saying, “Depart hence eastward, and hide thee by the brook of Chorrath (Cherith), that is before Jordan. And it shall be that thou shalt drink water of the brook, and I will charge the ravens to feed thee there.”⁸ Elias did according to the word of the Lord: he sat by the brook.⁹ The ravens, indeed, brought him loaves in the morning, and flesh in the evening; and he drank water of the brook. It came

⁶ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 16:29-32.

⁷ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 16:30. *Triodion*, Wednesday in the First Week, Great Compline, Ode Seven, Mode Plagal Two, by Saint Andrew of Crete.

⁸ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:1-4.

⁹ The Monastery of Saint George of Chozeva on the steep cliff of Wadi Kelt is situated in the Judean Desert near the ancient route from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is one of the oldest monastic communities in the holy land, having been built in the 6th C. The cave of Chorrath, in which Elias hid himself and was fed by the ravens, is now the cave church of the Prophet Elias. It is perched on the monastery’s third story. It was in that same cave, Righteous Joachim, the father of the Virgin Mary, received gladsome tidings from the angel that his wife, Anna, would conceive and give birth. The monastery had been on property belonging to the Righteous Joachim and Anna. The monastery and brotherhood is under the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The monastic church is dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

to pass after some time that the brook was dried up, because there had been no rain upon the earth.¹⁰

In the divine office for today, we chant to the Lord, “Thou dost grant that which transcendeth nature unto them that have submitted to Thine honored precepts, O Logos, and Thou dost make the portals of the rain subject to them through the Spirit, confirming their word.”¹¹

Saint Jerome takes note of the geography that imposed upon the prophet, saying, “A torrent does not have natural or running waters. Its waters come from rains, floods, storms, tempests. The torrent is never found on the mountains, but always in valleys, in downhill and steep places. The torrent’s waters are always turbid, always full of tempests. Our Lord drank of the troubled waters from the torrent of this world—sad waters, waters that had no joy. David also speaks of this, writing:

‘Our soul hath passed through a torrent [Ps. 123:4].’ If our Lord drank from the torrent of this world, how much more do His faithful servants? When Jezebel was persecuting the holy Prophet Elias, he received food. Furthermore, for forty days he made his way through the desert. ‘He was in the desert,’ Scripture says, ‘and he drank of the torrent Chorrath [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:4-6].’ Elias drank water in the desert when he was in deep sorrow and in dire want. He had fled from Judaea. Do you see how full of fear he was? He had quitted Judea and made for Mount Sinai. This is because Jezebel was in dread pursuit of him. He, therefore, had drunk of the torrent Chorrath. Nevertheless, because he persevered to the end, the waters of the torrent dried up. Because the water of the torrent failed, the Lord said to Elias, ‘Arise and go to the widow in Sarepta of the Sidonians [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:9].’ See how Elias also drinks of the torrent? But the Lord and Savior Himself drinks the cup of the torrent Kedron (Cedron). For that is where Scripture records Jesus was when His enemies came to arrest Him. ‘They came,’ it says, ‘beyond the



Prophet Elias

¹⁰ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:5-7.

¹¹ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode One, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

torrent to arrest him [Jn. 18:1].’ Notice how lowly is the place of the torrent, how rough and rugged it is. Kedron in Hebrew means ‘darkness,’ so you see that the torrents of this world are in darkness. The Lord, as we were saying, is betrayed; He is betrayed neither on the Mount of Olives nor in the temple, but in the torrent, and in the torrent of ‘darkness,’ Kedron, for all who hate the light, love the darkness.”¹²



Prophet Elias

Saint Cyprian describes the messengers to the prophet, writing: “Elias is sustained in his flight and solitude by ministering ravens. In persecution, he is nourished by birds bringing food to him. O how detestable is the cruelty of human malice! While the wild beasts spare and the birds feed the man of God, men lay plots and go mad!”¹³

Saint Jerome, in his interpretation of “Who giveth to the beasts their food, and to the younglings of the ravens which call upon Him [Ps. 146:10],” writes also of the ravens that assisted Elias, saying: “Would you like to know another mystery about ravens? The name Elias means ‘Lord God.’ Our Lord and Savior also suffered persecution from the Jews, as did Elias. The ravens signify

the Gentiles. Our Lord, in the person of Elias, received food from the ravens. Our Lord would feed ‘the younglings of the ravens which call upon Him [Ps. 146:10].’ So if you cry, you are a young raven; if you are silent, you are an old raven. We read in the prophet: ‘It shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved [Joel 2:32].’ If we apply this without reserve to ravens, will they also be saved? Answer, O Jew, you who follow only the letter of the word. You say that these ravens are really ravens; you do not interpret spiritually but carnally when you maintain that our verse is written about ravens.... We, then, are the young ravens, and we cry to Him and are saved.”¹⁴ We, therefore, chant, “He Who alone sustaineth every living

¹² Saint Jerome, “Homily 36,” *1-59 On The Psalms, Volume 1*, The Fathers of the Church, 2nd ed., Vol. 48, pp. 277, 278.

¹³ Saint Cyprian, “The Lord’s Prayer,” Ch. 21, *Treatises*, FC, 3rd ed., 36:146.

¹⁴ Saint Jerome, “Hom. 56,” *1-59 On The Psalms, Volume 1*, FC, 2nd ed., 48:405, 406.

thing, by His good will, through a raven, provided thee with a banquet as a chosen guest, O prophet.”¹⁵

Prophet Elias at Sarepta

The word of the Lord came to Elias, saying, “Arise, and go to Sarepta¹⁶ of the Sidonian land. Behold, I have there commanded a widow-woman to maintain thee.” Elias arose and went to Sarepta. He came to the city gate. He observed a widow who was there gathering sticks. Elias cried after her, saying, “Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” She hearkened and fetched it. Elias cried after her, saying, “Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of the bread that is in thy hand.” The woman answered, “As the Lord thy God lives, I have not a cake, but only a handful of meal in the pitcher, and a little oil in a cruse. Behold, I am going to gather two sticks. I shall go in and dress it for myself and my children. Then we shall eat it and die.”¹⁷

Elias said to her, “Be of good courage, go in and do according to thy word. But make me thereof a little cake. And thou shalt bring it out to me first. And thou shalt make some for thyself and thy children last. For thus saith the Lord, ‘The pitcher of meal shall not fail, and the cruse of oil shall not diminish, until the day that the Lord gives rain upon the earth.’” The woman went and did according to his word. Verily, the pitcher of meal failed not, and the cruse of oil was not diminished, according to the word of the Lord.¹⁸

Saint Andrew of Crete, upon reading this account, admonishes us in this fashion: “Heaven is closed to thee, my soul, and a famine from God has seized thee: for thou hast been disobedient, as Achaab was to the words of



*Chozeva Lavra on the steep cliff of
Wadi Kelt, near the ancient route
from Jerusalem to Jericho*

¹⁵ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode Three, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

¹⁶ Sarepta (Zarephath) is between Tyre and Sidon. It belonged to the tribe of Aser, to whom Moses said: “Aser is blessed with children; and he shall be acceptable to his brethren: he shall dip his foot in oil [Deut. 33:24].”

¹⁷ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:8-12.

¹⁸ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:13-16.

Elias the Thesbite.¹⁹ But imitate the widow of Sarepta, and feed the prophet's soul."²⁰

Saint Leo, Pope of Rome, praises the widow and comments: "The effects of mercy will never be lacking to those in whom mercy itself is not lacking. The widow of Sarepta experienced this when, in the time of famine, she placed before the blessed Elias the food for one day, which was all she had.²¹ She put the hunger of the prophet before her own necessity. She expended on him without hesitation her scant grain and bit of oil. What she asked in faith did not fail her; and, when the vessels were emptied by her dutiful outpouring, a spring of new richness arose, so that by her holy use the fullness of her substance did not diminish, nor was there fear of its failure."²²

Saint Gregory the Dialogist, tells us that "the word of the preacher is seed in the heart of the hearer. And a good hearer afterward proffers a great crop of knowledge in him whence he previously received a small seed of the tongue. This is in good accord with the miracle performed by the prophet for the widow who, lest she lose her two sons when the creditor took them away, obeyed his words and, from that which contained but little oil, poured it into empty vessels, all of which were then refilled to the brim; and by their replenishment, she was set free of her debt to her creditor. Indeed, what does the woman signify but Holy Church, the Mother of two peoples, that is, the Jews and the Gentiles, as if of two sons? Formerly, as a result of perverse deeds, through the persuasion of the cold spirit, she accepted, as it were, a coin of sin from a creditor and feared to lose the two sons whom she had borne in faith. But obeying the words of the prophet, that is, the precepts of Holy Writ, she refilled empty vessels from the little oil which she had. Because when the empty minds of many hear even a little of the divine love from the mouth of one learned man, through abounding grace, they are filled with the ointment of divine love right to the brim. And already now the hearts of many, which formerly were empty vessels, are filled with the ointment of the Spirit which from the scarcity of oil seemed only to be infused. Because, while faith is given to some and received from other hearers, the woman of Sarepta, namely Holy Church, is no longer held by the debt to her creditor."²³

¹⁹ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:1.

²⁰ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:9; Lk. 4:25. *Triodion*, Wednesday in the First Week, Great Compline, Ode Seven, Mode Plagal Two, by Saint Andrew of Crete.

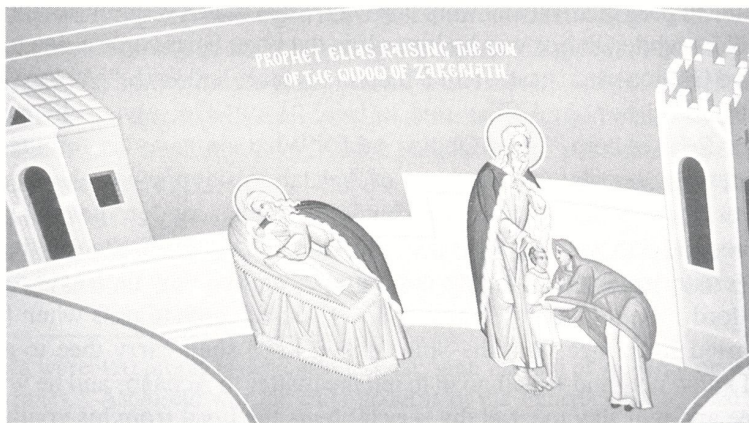
²¹ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:9-16.

²² Saint Leo the Great, "Sermon 42(3)," *Sermons*, FC, 93:181, 182.

²³ Saint Gregory the Great (the Dialogist), *The Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great On the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, trans. T. Gray and edited by J. Cownie (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1990), pp. 34, 35.

Prophet Elias Raises the Widow's Son

It came to pass afterward, that the son of the woman—the mistress of the house—was sick. His sickness was very severe, until there was no breath left in him. She then said to Elias, “What have I to do with thee, O man of God? Hast thou come in to me to bring my sins to remembrance, and to slay my son?” Elias said to the woman, “Give me thy son.” Taking him out of her bosom, Elias took him up to the chamber in which he himself lodged, and set him down on the bed. Elias cried aloud, and said, “Alas, O Lord, the witness of the widow with whom I sojourn, Thou hast wrought evil for her in slaying her son.” And Elias breathed on the child thrice, and called on the Lord, and said, “O Lord my God, let, I pray thee, the soul of this child return to him.” And it was so, and the child cried out. Elias then brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother. Elias said to her, “See, thy son lives.” The woman said to Elias, “Behold, I know that thou art a man of God, and the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true.”²⁴



Prophet Elias Raising the Son of the Widow

The hymnographer observes the prophet's breathing upon the dead lad thrice and says: "Thou didst clearly signify the glory of the Trinity with thy threefold breathing, and didst hand back alive the child to his mother."²⁵

The Jews read this and believe that the prophet raised the dead. Saint Kyril of Jerusalem, therefore, asks them: "Why do you assert that Elissaios and Elias raised the dead, but deny the resurrection of the Savior?... Elissaios indeed raised a dead man, but he did not conquer the world. Elias raised the

²⁴ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:17-24.

²⁵ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode Four, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

dead, but demons are not driven out in the name of Elias. We do not speak ill of these prophets, but we praise their Master more.”²⁶

3 Kings, Chapter 18

Prophet Elias at Samaria

After many days, it came to pass in the third year, that the word of the Lord came to Elias and said, “Go, and appear before Achaab, and I will bring rain upon the face of the earth.” Elias went to appear before Achaab. He found that the famine was severe in Samaria. Achaab called Obdios (Obiu, Obadiah) the steward.²⁷ Now Obdios feared the Lord greatly. Despite the fact that the queen smote the prophets of the Lord, it was this Obdios who took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifty in a cave. Obdios also fed them with bread and water.²⁸

Achaab invited Obdios to accompany him in order to find grass by the springs and brooks for the horses and animals lest the creatures should perish. So it came to pass that Achaab went one way, and Obdios went by another way alone. Now while Obdios was by himself in the way, Elias came alone to meet him. And Obdios made haste, and fell upon his face, and said, “My lord Elias, art thou indeed he?” And Elias said to him, “I am. Go, say to thy master, ‘Behold, Elias is here.’” And Obdios said, “What sin have I committed that thou givest thy servant into the hand of Achaab to slay me? As the Lord thy God lives, there is not a nation or a kingdom, whither my lord has not sent to seek thee, and if they said, ‘He is not here,’ then has he set fire to the kingdom and its territories, because he has not found thee. And now thou sayest, ‘Go, tell thy lord, “Behold, Elias is here.”’ And it shall come to pass when I shall be departed from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee to a land which I know not, and I shall go in to tell the matter to Achaab, and he will not find thee and will slay me; yet thy servant fears the Lord from his youth. Has it not been told to thee my lord, what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, that I hid a hundred men of the prophets of the Lord, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now thou sayest to me, ‘Go, say to thy master, “Behold, Elias is here.” He shall slay me.’” And Elias said, “As the Lord of Hosts before Whom I stand lives, today I will appear before him.”²⁹

²⁶ Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, “Catechesis XIV(16),” *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*, FC, 64:42.

²⁷ Prophet Obdios (Obadiah) is commemorated by the holy Church on the 19th of November.

²⁸ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:1-4.

²⁹ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:5-15.

Obdios went to meet Achaab, disclosing to him his encounter with Elias. Achaab made haste and went forth to meet Elias. And it came to pass when Achaab saw Elias, that Achaab said to Elias, "Art thou he that perverts Israel?" And Elias said, "I do not pervert Israel; but it is thou and thy father's house, in that ye forsake the Lord your God, and thou hast gone after Baalim. And now send, gather to me all Israel to Mount Carmel, and the prophets of shame four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, that eat at Jezebel's table."³⁰ And Achaab sent to all Israel, and gathered all the prophets to Mount Carmel.³¹

Prophet Elias on Mount Carmel

Achaab dispatched word to all Israel, and he gathered all the idolatrous prophets to Mount Carmel. Elias addressed all, saying, "How long will ye halt on both feet? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." And the people answered not a word. Elias said to the people, "I am left, the only one prophet of the Lord; and the prophets of Baal are four hundred and fifty men, and the prophets of the groves four hundred. Let them give us two oxen, and let them choose one for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire on the wood. And I will dress the other bullock, and put on no fire. And do ye call loudly on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord my God. And it shall come to pass that the One Who shall answer by fire, He is God." All the people answered and said, "The word which thou hast spoken is good."³²

Elias said to the prophets of shame, "Choose to yourselves one calf, and dress it first, for ye are many; and call ye on the name of your god, but

³⁰ There were 450 prophets dedicated to Baal, with the 400 of Asherah or Ashtoreth "the groves." Ashtoreth was the chief goddess of the Phoenicians, as Baal was the male. She is identified as Ishtar or Nana, the planetary Venus among the Assyrian gods in inscriptions. She partly represents the planet Venus, partly the moon, "the queen of heaven [Jer. 7:18; 44:17, 18 KJV]." Her worship was most licentious and abominable. It was closely connected with that of Asherah, "the grove." Ashtoreh is the goddess, Asherah "the groves," the image or the symbol of the goddess, of wood; *asher, yashar*, "to be straight," a straight stem of a tree living, or fixed upright. The active and passive powers of nature, generative and receptive, suggested the male and female deities, Baal and Ashtoreh. King Achaab of Israel, under Jezebel's influence (daughter of Ethbaal, priest of Baal and king of Sidon), established the worship of Baal and Asherah. Baal (pl. Baalim) was the chief male deity of the Canaanites and Phoenicians. Baal means lord, in the sense of owner or possessor. Baal was sometimes the sun god, sometimes of fire; thus Ashtoreh was the moon. The stone pillar was the symbol of Baal, as the sacred tree was the symbol of Ashtoreh; stone marking his strength as the male, the tree her fruitfulness. *Fausset's Bible Dictionary in BibleWorks for Windows* (2001).

³¹ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:16-20.

³² 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:21-24.

apply no fire." They took the calf and dressed it. They called on the name of Baal from morning till noon, and said, "Hear us, O Baal, hear us!" There was neither voice nor hearing. The abominable prophets ran up and down on the altar which they had fashioned. Now it was noon when Elias mocked them, saying, "Call with a loud voice, for he is a god; for he is meditating, or else perhaps he is engaged in business, or perhaps he is asleep, and is to be awakened." They, indeed, cried louder. They cut themselves according to their custom with knives and lancets until the blood gushed out upon them. And they uttered prophesies until the evening came. Then it came to pass, as it was the time of the offering of the sacrifice, that Elias spoke to the prophets of the abominations, saying, "Stand by for the present, and I will offer my sacrifice." And they stood aside and departed.³³

Elias said to the people, "Come near to me." And all the people came near to him. Elias took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, as the Lord spoke to him, saying, "Israel shall be thy name." Elias then built up the stones in the name of the Lord. He repaired the altar that had been broken down. He made a trench that would hold two measures of seed round about the altar. He next piled the cleft wood on the altar, which he had made, and divided the whole-burnt-offering. Following this, he laid the offering, in order, on the wood. He then said, "Fetch me four pitchers of water, and pour it on the whole-burnt-offering, and on the wood." The people complied. Elias then said, "Do it the second time." And he said, "Do it the third time." The people did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar, and they filled the trench with water.³⁴

Elias cried aloud to heaven, and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, answer me, O Lord, answer me this day by fire, and let all this people know that Thou art the Lord, the God of Israel, and I am Thy servant, and for Thy sake I have wrought these works. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, and let this people know that Thou art the Lord God, and Thou hast turned back the heart of this people." Then fire fell from the Lord out of heaven, and devoured the whole-burnt-offerings, and the wood and the water that was in the trench, and the fire licked up the stones and the earth.³⁵

The Church chants: "The law of thy fathers hath shown thee forth as a true man of prayer, O Elias, a wonder-worker that transformeth the nature of the elements and utterly consumeth the righteous sacrifice with water."³⁶

³³ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:25-29.

³⁴ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:30-35.

³⁵ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:36-38.

³⁶ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode Five, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

All the people fell upon their faces, and said, "Truly the Lord is God; He is God." Elias said to the people, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they took them. Elias brought them down to the brook Kisson (Kishon), and he slew them there.³⁷

The holy Church chants: "Rendering priestly service through the word of grace, O Elias, thou didst slay the shameful priests with thy blameless hands, consumed with zeal as with fire."³⁸

Saint Gregory of Nyssa comments: "The marvellous sacrifice of the old Thesbite, that passes all human understanding, what else does it do but prefigure in action the Faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and redemption? For when all the people of the Hebrews had trodden underfoot the religion of their fathers, and fallen into the error of polytheism, and their King Achaab was deluded by idolatry, with Jezebel—of ill-omened name, as the wicked partner of his life, and the vile prompter of his impiety—the prophet, filled with the grace of the Spirit, coming to a meeting with Achaab, withstood the priests of Baal in a marvellous and wondrous contest in the sight of the king and all the people. He did this by proposing to them the task of sacrificing the bullock without fire. He displayed them in a ridiculous and wretched plight, vainly praying and crying aloud to gods that were not. At last, himself invoking his own and the true God, he accomplished the test proposed with further exaggerations and additions. For he did not simply by prayer bring down the fire from heaven upon the wood when it was dry, but exhorted and enjoined the attendants to bring an abundance of water. And when he had thrice poured out the barrels upon the cleft wood, he kindled at his prayer the fire from out of the water, that by the contrariety of the elements, so concurring in friendly cooperation, he might show with superabundant force the power of his own God.



Slaying of the Prophets of Baal

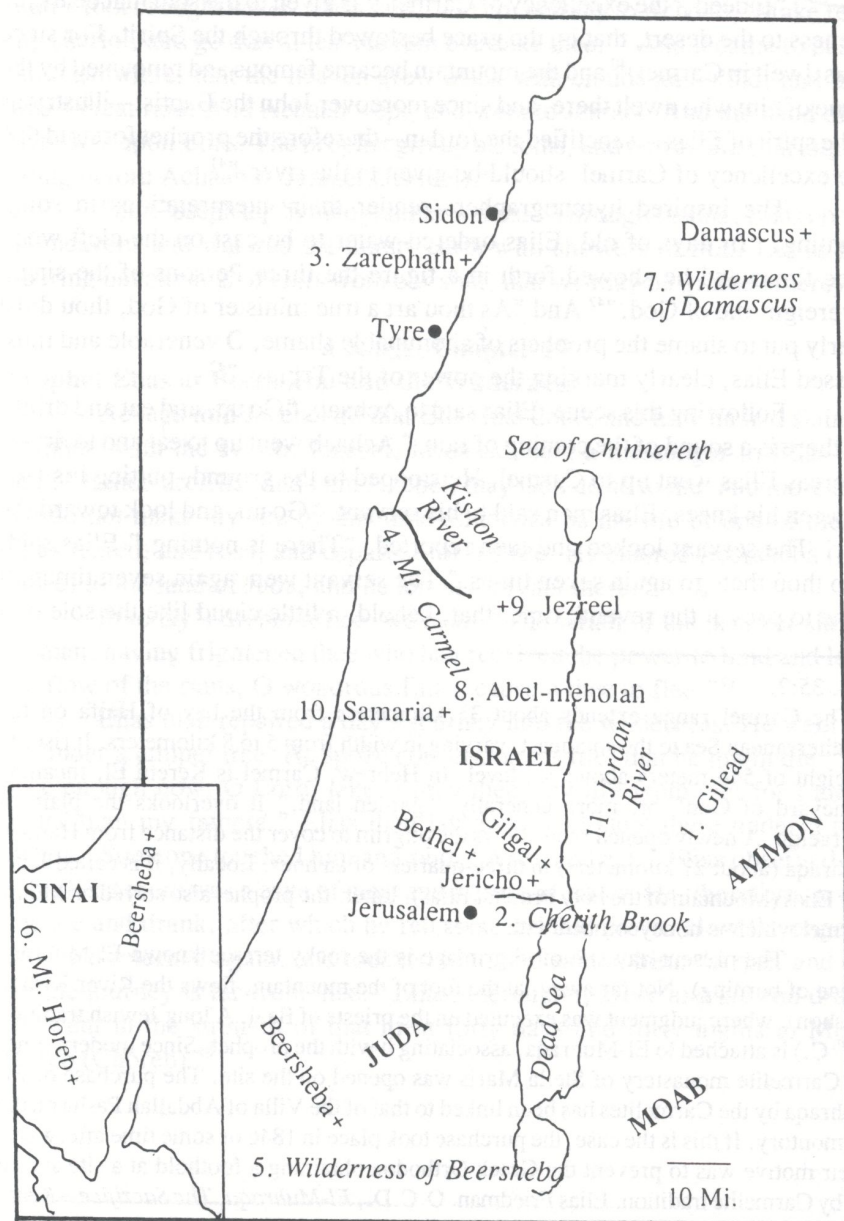
"Now herein, by that wondrous sacrifice, Elias clearly proclaimed to us the sacramental rite of Baptism that should afterward be instituted. For the fire was kindled by water thrice poured upon it, so that it is clearly shown that where the mystic water is, there is the kindling, warm, and fiery Spirit, that burns up the ungodly, and illuminates the faithful....

³⁷ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:39, 40.

³⁸ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode Five, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

The Travels of Prophet Elias in Israel, Syria, and the Sinai

1. Thesbe of Gilead—Birthplace of Elias [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:1].
2. Cherith (Chorrath) Brook—Ravens feed Elias [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:4, 6].
3. Zarephath (Sarepta)—The Widow: "The pitcher of meal failed not, and the cruse of oil was not diminished...[3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:16]."
4. Mount Carmel and Kishon (Kisson)—The Slaughter of the prophets of Baal at the Brook of Kishon [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:40]. Elias runs in front of Achaab's chariot [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:46].
5. Wilderness of Beersheba—An angel visits Elias under a juniper tree [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:5].
6. Mount Horeb—Elias in the Sinai Peninsula: "He arose, and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb (Choreb) [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:8].
7. Damascus—Elias is sent by God to anoint a king: "The Lord said to him, 'Go, return, and thou shalt come into the way of the wilderness of Damascus: and thou shalt go and anoint Azael (Hazael) to be king over Syria [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:15].'"
8. Abel-meholah—Elissaios leaves his home and follows Elias [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:19].
9. Jezreel (Jezreal)—Elias Meets Achaab after the taking of Naboth's Vineyard: "Thus saith the Lord, 'Forasmuch as thou hast slain and taken possession...[3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 21:19].'"
10. Samaria—Elias foretells the death of Ahaziah (Ochozias) [4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 1:4].
11. Jordan River—Elias is taken with a whirlwind [4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 2:1].



"Indeed, 'the excellency of Carmel'³⁹ is given to the soul that bears the likeness to the desert, that is, the grace bestowed through the Spirit. For since Elias dwelt in Carmel,⁴⁰ and the mountain became famous and renowned by the virtue of him who dwelt there, and since moreover John the Baptist—illustrious in the spirit of Elias—sanctified the Jordan—therefore the prophet foretold that 'the excellency of Carmel' should be given to the river."⁴¹

The inspired hymnographers render their interpretations in song, chanting: "In days of old, Elias ordered water to be cast on the cleft wood three times and he showed forth in a figure the three Persons of the single sovereign rule of God."⁴² And "As thou art a true minister of God, thou didst utterly put to shame the prophets of abominable shame, O venerable and most blessed Elias, clearly marking the power of the Trinity."⁴³

Following this scene, Elias said to Achaab, "Go up, and eat and drink, for there is a sound of the coming of rain." Achaab went up to eat and to drink, whereas Elias went up to Carmel. He stooped to the ground, putting his face between his knees. Elias then said to his servant, "Go up, and look toward the sea." The servant looked and then reported, "There is nothing." Elias said, "Do thou then go again seven times." The servant went again seven times. It came to pass at the seventh time, that, behold, a little cloud like the sole of a

³⁹ Is. 35:2.

⁴⁰ The Carmel range extends about 35 kilometers from the bay of Haifa on the Mediterranean Sea to the southeast, varying in width from 5 to 8 kilometers. It rises to a height of 546 meters above sea level. In Hebrew, Carmel is Kerem El, meaning "vineyard of God" or, more generally, "garden land." It overlooks the plain of Esdraelon. A newly opened road allows the pilgrim to cover the distance from Haifa to Muhraqa (about 27 kilometers) in three-quarters of an hour. Locally, it is called Jebel mar Elias (Mountain of the holy Prophet Elias). Later, the prophet also stayed on Mount Carmel which is honeycombed with caves.

The present-day site of pilgrimage is the rocky terrace known El-Muhraqa (place of burning). Not far away, at the foot of the mountain, flows the River Kishon (Qishon), where judgment was executed on the priests of Baal. A long Jewish tradition (12th C.) is attached to El-Muhraqa, associating it with the prophet. Since modern times the Carmelite monastery of Stella Maris was opened on the site. The purchase of El-Muhraqa by the Carmelites has been linked to that of the Villa of Abdallah Pasha on the promontory. If this is the case, the purchase took place in 1846 or some time afterward. Their motive was to prevent the Greek Orthodox obtaining a foothold at a site staked out by Carmelite tradition. Elias Friedman, O.C.D., *El-Muhraqa, The Sacrifice—Keren Ha-Karmel* (Rome, 1986); M. Basilea Schlink, *Mount Carmel and the Prophet Elijah* (Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, Darmstadt-Eberstadt, West Germany), 1988).

⁴¹ Saint Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Baptism of Christ," *Select Writings*, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Ser., Vol. V, pp. 522, 523.

⁴² Sunday, The Midnight Office, Canon to the Holy Trinity, Ode Three, Mode Three.

⁴³ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode Five, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

man's foot brought water. Elias said, "Go up, and say to Achaab, 'Make ready thy chariot, and go down, lest the rain overtake thee.'" And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Achaab wept, and went to Jezrael. And the hand of the Lord was upon Elias. The prophet girt up his loins, and outran the chariot, thus going before Achaab to Jezrael (Jezreel).⁴⁴

Saint Joseph the hymnographer writes: "Through fasting, Elias opened the heavens and watered the thirsty earth with showers of rain. Let us fast, pouring out streams of tears from our soul, that we may be granted mercy."⁴⁵

3 Kings, Chapter 19

Prophet Elias at Beersheba and the Wilderness

Achaab told Jezebel all that Elias had done, and how he had slain the prophets with the sword. Jezebel, incensed, sent a messenger to Elias who said: "If thou art Elias and I am Jezebel, may God do so to me, and more also, if I do not make thy life by this time tomorrow as the life of one of them." Elias feared, and rose, and departed for his life. He entered Beersheba (Bersabee) to the land of Juda, and he left his servant there.⁴⁶

In today's divine office, we hear: "The wrath of the prophet-slaying woman, having frightened thee who had received the power to bind and loose the flow of the rains, O wondrous Elias, causeth thee to flee."⁴⁷

Elias then repaired a day's journey into the wilderness. He went and sat under a juniper tree. He spoke concerning his life, that he might die: "Let it be enough now, O Lord, take, I pray thee, my life from me; for I am no better than my fathers." Elias then lay down and slept there under a tree. Behold! Someone touched him and said, "Arise and eat." Elias observed that at his head there was a cake of meal and a cruse of water. He, therefore, arose, and ate and drank, after which he returned and laid down. Now the angel of the Lord returned again, and touched him, and said to him, "Arise, and eat, for the journey is far from thee." Elias, thereupon, arose and ate and drank. He went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb (Choreb).⁴⁸

⁴⁴ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 18:41-46.

⁴⁵ *Triodion*, Monday in the Sixth Week, Orthros Canon, Ode Eight, Mode One, by Joseph.

⁴⁶ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:1-3.

⁴⁷ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode Six, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

⁴⁸ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:4-8.

Prophet Elias on Mount Horeb⁴⁹

Once there, Elias entered into a cave, and rested there. Behold, the word of the Lord came to him! The Lord said, "What doest thou here, Elias?" And Elias replied, "I have been very jealous for the Lord Almighty, because the children of Israel have forsaken Thee. They have digged down Thine altars, and have slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I only am left alone, and they seek my life to take it." The Lord answered, "Thou shalt go forth tomorrow, and shalt stand before the Lord in the mount. Behold, the Lord will pass by!" Behold, there was a great and strong wind rending the mountains, and crushing the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire the voice of a gentle breeze.⁵⁰

Saint Ambrose: "The desert is a good flight, for Elias fled there, and Elissaios, and John the Baptist. Elias fled the woman Jezebel, that is, 'the outpouring of vanity,' and fled to Mount Horeb (Choreb), which means 'a drying up,' so that the outflow of fleshly vanity might be dried up in him and he might come to know God more fully. For he was by the torrent Chorrath, which means 'knowledge,' where he could drink in the abundant overflow of God's knowledge.⁵¹ He fled from the world in such a way that he did not even seek out food for this body, except only what the servant birds had brought,⁵² although his food for the most part was not of earth.⁵³ Indeed, he walked forty days in the strength of the food which he had received.⁵⁴ To be sure, it was not a woman that such a great prophet was fleeing, but it was this world. And it was not death that he feared, for he offered himself.... He said, 'Let it be enough now, O Lord, take, I pray thee, my life from me; for I am no better than my fathers [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:4].' He endured a weariness of this life,

⁴⁹ Horeb is a general name for the whole mountain range of which Sinai was one of the summits. Presently, the whole range is Jebel Musa, approximately two miles long by about one mile in breadth. It contains a very spacious plain at its northeast end, called the Er Rahah, in which the Israelites encamped for nearly a whole year. Sina or Sinai is mentioned, as a desert and a mountain, in thirty-five passages of the Septuagint. In seventeen passages the same desert and mountain is called Horeb, or "the waste." Jebel Katherin, at its highest point is 8,063 feet above the sea; Jebel Musa, toward the south is about 7,000 feet Horeb is the northern part of the Sinaitic range.

⁵⁰ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:9-12.

⁵¹ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:5.

⁵² 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 17:6.

⁵³ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:5-7.

⁵⁴ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:8.

not a desire for it. He was fleeing worldly enticement and the contagion of filthy conduct and the impious acts of an unholy and sinful generation."⁵⁵

Saint Joseph the Hymnographer tells us that "Elias gave lightness to his flesh by increasing his prayer and fasting, and then he beheld the Lord in a light and gentle breeze. Follow his example, O my soul: cast aside the grossness of sensual pleasures, and so behold Him Who is thy true desire."⁵⁶

Moreover, it was Christ Whom the prophet met: for, "the mild and gentle breeze showed the Lord to thee, O Elias, who was zealous for God Almighty: not the wind of the tempest, nor the earthquake, nor yet the fearsome fire. Therefore, to meet Jesus didst thou chant, 'Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!'"⁵⁷

Saint Maximos, speaking of the mind that has shaken off distraction, as did Elias, writes: "The meaning of Holy Writ reveals itself gradually to the more discerning mind in loftier senses when it has put off the complex whole of the words formed in it bodily, as in the sound of a gentle breeze. Through a supreme abandonment of natural activities, such a mind has been able to perceive sense only in a simplicity which reveals the Logos, the way that the great Elias was granted the vision in the cave at Horeb. For Horeb means 'newness,' which is the virtuous condition in the new spirit of grace. The cave is the hiddenness of spiritual wisdom in which one who enters will mystically experience the knowledge which goes beyond the senses and in which God is found. Therefore, anyone who truly seeks God as did the great Elias will come upon him not only on Horeb, that is, as an ascetic in the practise of the virtues, but also in the cave of Horeb, that is, as a contemplative in the hidden place of wisdom which can exist only in the habit of the virtues."⁵⁸

Saint Gregory Palamas also observes that "after Elias fasted forty days,"⁵⁹ he saw the Lord on the mountain. He did not see Him in the fire, as the elders of Israel had earlier.⁶⁰ Elias passed beyond the fiery vision by his God-pleasing fast. Indeed, he beheld the Lord in the sound of a light passing breeze.⁶¹ Elias had approached more closely to our Lord's words: 'God is Spirit, and it is needful for those who revere Him to do reverence in spirit and

⁵⁵ Saint Ambrose, "The Flight from the World," § 6.34, *Seven Exegetical Works*, FC, 65:307, 308.

⁵⁶ *Triodion*, Friday in the Fifth Week, Orthros Canon, Ode Nine, Mode One, by Joseph.

⁵⁷ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode Seven, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

⁵⁸ Saint Maximus the Confessor, "Chapters on Knowledge: Second Century," ¶ 74, *Select Writings*, The Classics of Western Spirituality, p. 163.

⁵⁹ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:8.

⁶⁰ Ex. 24:9, 10; Deut. 5:23.

⁶¹ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:12.

truth [Jn. 4:24].’ For the sound prefigured the Truth and the preaching of Him Who is Truth Itself, which rang out around all the ends of the earth, and the passing breeze prefigured the Spirit and grace.

“From this vision while fasting,” continues Saint Gregory, “Elias also received power to anoint a prophet in his stead. He also received power to bestow upon Elissaios a double portion of the grace he possessed, and to mount up above the earth in mid-air.⁶² This pointed clearly toward Christ’s ascension⁶³ from earth to heaven which was to happen later.”⁶⁴

And it came to pass when Elias heard, that he wrapped his face in his mantle. He then went forth and stood in the cave. Behold! A voice came to him and said, “What doest thou here, Elias?” And Elias said, “I have been very jealous for the Lord Almighty; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, and they have overthrown Thine altars, and have slain thy prophets with the sword! And I am left entirely alone, and they seek my life to take it.”⁶⁵

Saint Gregory the Great observes that “Elias, when he heard the voice of the Lord speaking to him, is reported to have stood in the door of his cave and veiled his face. Indeed, when through the grace of contemplation the voice of heavenly understanding speaks in his mind, the whole man is already not within the cave. This is because care of the flesh does not possess his spirit. But he stands in the doorway, because he intends to leave the confines of mortality. Again, he who already stands at the door of his cave and hears the words of God in the ears of his heart must veil his face. This is because when we are led through heavenly grace to the understanding of higher things, the more subtly we are lifted, the more often we should through humility restrain ourselves in our understanding. We ought to do so lest we should try to be more wise than it behooves us to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety,⁶⁶ lest when we dwell too long on the unseen we should go astray, and lest in that incorporeal nature we should seek something of corporeal light.”⁶⁷

Saint Jerome comments: “The Book of Kings⁶⁸ says of Elias that he stood in the entrance of a cave on Mount Sinai, and from there beheld the Lord as He passed. Note that it says he saw the back of the Lord Savior when he

⁶² 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 2:9-11.

⁶³ Acts 1:9-11.

⁶⁴ Saint Gregory Palamas, “Hom. 6, To Encourage Fasting,” §§ 12, 13, *The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, Vol. One, ed. by Christopher Veniamin (South Canaan, PA: Saint Tikhon’s Seminary Press), pp. 71, 72.

⁶⁵ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:13, 14.

⁶⁶ Rom. 12:3.

⁶⁷ Saint Gregory the Great (the Dialogist), *The Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great On the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Book II, “Hom. I,” pp. 169, 170.

⁶⁸ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:11, 12.

stood in the hollow of a rock. The rock is a symbol for the Lord and Savior, according to the apostle—‘the Rock was the Christ [1 Cor. 10:4].’ Since we, too, are set in the hollow of the Rock, through the flesh, we perceive God.”⁶⁹

Saint Gregory Palamas expounds on how the voice of a light breeze foretold the rushing mighty wind that would fill the house where the apostles were sitting during the Pentecost. “Elias’ vision forewarned of this sound: ‘Behold, the voice of a light breeze, and in it was the Lord [3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:12].’ This ‘voice of a light breeze’ is the sound of breath. It is also referred to in Christ’s Gospel.... For after Christ’s resurrection, He breathed on His disciples and said, ‘Receive ye the Holy Spirit [Jn. 20:22].’”⁷⁰

For the Pentecost, we sing: “Of old, Elias the zealot, breathing with fire, was borne aloft upon a fiery chariot in glory, thus clearly showing forth now in the apostolic choir at holy Zion that divine on-breathing which shone from on high, by means of which the world is illumined.”⁷¹

The Lord then responded to Elias, saying, “Go, return, and thou shalt come into the way of the wilderness of Damascus. And thou shalt go and anoint Azael to be king over Syria. And Jehu (Ju) the son of Namessi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel. And Elisaios the son of Saphat shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.”⁷² And it shall come to pass, that whosoever escapes from the sword of Azael, Jehu shall slay; and whosoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisaios shall slay. And thou shalt leave in Israel seven thousand men, all the knees which had not bowed themselves to Baal, and every mouth which had not worshipped him.”⁷³



Prophet Elias

⁶⁹ Saint Jerome, “Hom. 70,” *60-96 On The Psalms, Volume 2*, FC, 2nd ed., 57: 96.

⁷⁰ Saint Gregory Palamas, “Hom. 24, On How the Holy Spirit was Manifested and Shared out at Pentecost,” § 4, *The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, Vol. Two, pp. 24, 25.

⁷¹ Friday after Pentecost, Aposticha of the Praises, Mode One.

⁷² Prophet Elisaios is commemorated by the holy Church on the 14th of June.

⁷³ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:15-18.

In comparing this passage of 3 Kings (1 Kgs.) 19:10 with that of Romans 11, we hear that "God did not thrust away His people whom He foreknew. Or do ye not know what saith the Scripture in the case of Elias, how he pleadeth with God against Israel, saying, 'Lord, they killed Thy prophets and dug down Thine altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life'?"⁷⁴ But what saith the divine answer of God to him? 'I left to Myself seven thousand men, who bowed not a knee to Baal.'⁷⁵ So then, also in the present time there hath come to be a remnant according to an election of grace."⁷⁶

Elias then departed. He found Elissaios, who was engaged at plowing with twelve yoke of oxen. Elias passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.⁷⁷ Elissaios took a yoke of oxen and slew them, boiling them with the instruments of the oxen, and gave to the people, and they ate. He then arose and went after Elias, and ministered to him.⁷⁸

3 Kings, Chapter 20⁷⁹

Prophet Elias at Samaria Corrects Achaab with Regard to Naboth

Now Naboth (Nabuthai) the Jezraelite had a vineyard, near the threshing floor of Achaab king of Samaria. Achaab coveted the vineyard of Naboth. Since Naboth was unwilling to sell it to him, he was cut off from life by the wiles and intrigues of Jezebel. Thus Achaab got possession of the vineyard, though he is said at the same time to have regretted the death of Naboth.⁸⁰

The Lord spoke to Elias, saying, "Arise, and go down to meet Achaab king of Israel, who is in Samaria. For he is in the vineyard of Naboth, and has gone down thither to take possession of it. And thou shalt speak to him, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord, "Forasmuch as thou hast slain and taken possession, in every place where the swine and the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, there shall the dogs lick thy blood; and the harlots shall wash themselves in thy blood."'" And Achaab said to Elias, "Hast thou found me, mine enemy?" Elias answered, "I have found thee, because thou hast wickedly

⁷⁴ Cf. 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:10, 14.

⁷⁵ Cf. 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:18.

⁷⁶ Rom. 11:2-5.

⁷⁷ Elias' mantle (Heb. *adereth*; Gk. *μηλωτήν*), of sheepskin, was assumed by Elissaios. It became the pattern for the hairy cloak which, afterward, became a prophet's conventional garb (Zach. 13:4 "garments of hair," Gk. *δέριον τριχίνην*).

⁷⁸ 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:19-21.

⁷⁹ Chapter 21 in KJV.

⁸⁰ *The Sacred History of Sulpitius Severus*, Bk. I, Ch. XLIV, Nicene and Post-Nicene, 2nd Ser., XI:92. Sulpitius (or Sulpicius) Severus was born in Aquitania circa A.D. 363 and reposed ca. 420.

sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. Behold, I bring evil upon thee. And I will kindle a fire after thee, and I will utterly destroy every male of Achaab, and him that is shut up and him that is left in Israel. And I will make thy house as the house of Jeroboam the son of Nabat, and as the house of Baasa son of Achia, because of the provocations wherewith thou hast provoked Me, and caused Israel to sin.”⁸¹

And the Lord spoke of Jezebel, saying, “The dogs shall devour her within the fortification of Jezrael....Achaab did wickedly, in that he sold himself to do that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his wife Jezebel led him astray. And he did very abominably in following after the abominations, according to all that the Amorite did, whom the Lord utterly destroyed from before the children of Israel.”⁸²

Now because of this word from Prophet Elias, Achaab was pierced with sorrow before the Lord. Achaab went weeping, and rent his garment, and girt sackcloth upon his body, and fasted. He put on sackcloth also in the day that he smote Naboth. The word of the Lord, consequently, came by the hand of His servant Elias concerning Achaab, and the Lord said, “Hast thou seen how Achaab has been pricked to the heart before Me? I will not bring on the evil in his days, but in his son’s days will I bring on the evil.”⁸³

The Church chants: “Well did Achaab find the just destruction of his house, through the prophet’s condemnation, to be the dread retribution for his vile commission of murder.”⁸⁴

Saint Jerome comments upon the conscience-stricken Achaab, saying: “Achaab was censured by the Lord when he killed Naboth and took his vineyard and spilled just blood. Elias, the prophet, was sent to him to say, ‘Thou hast slain. Moreover also thou hast taken possession.’ Immediately the king’s conscience smote and tormented him. He bowed his head and walked with eyes downcast; and this is an impious king robed in purple. Afterward, Scripture says, he went about wearing haircloth under his royal attire, and God seeing him said: ‘Because Achaab hath humbled himself for My sake, I will not bring evil against him.’ Just realize the power of haircloth, and of fasting, and how much blood is washed away by humble tears! This, then, is the proper way to wear haircloth and the proper way to fast.”⁸⁵

The historian notes that “Achaab, acknowledging his crime, is related to have done penance clothed in sackcloth; and in this way he turned aside threatening punishment. For the king of Syria with a great army, having

⁸¹ 3 Kgs. 20 (1 Kgs. 21): 8-22.

⁸² 3 Kgs. 20 (1 Kgs. 21): 25, 26.

⁸³ 3 Kgs. 20 (1 Kgs. 21): 27-29.

⁸⁴ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode Eight, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

⁸⁵ Saint Jerome, “Hom. 51,” *1-59 On The Psalms, Volume 1*, FC, 2nd ed., 48:369.

formed a military confederacy with thirty-two kings, entered the territories of Samaria, and began to besiege the city with its king. The affairs of the besieged being then in a state of great distress, the Syrian king offered these conditions in the war: if they should give up their gold and silver and women, he would spare their lives. But, with such iniquitous conditions offered, it seemed better to suffer the greatest extremities. And now when the safety of all was despaired of, a prophet sent by God went to the king. The latter encouraged the king to go forth to battle. But when the king hesitated, the prophet strengthened his confidence in many ways. Accordingly, by the king making a sally, the enemy hosts were routed. Indeed, an abundant store of booty was secured. But, after a year, the Syrian king returned with recruited strength into Samaria. He was burning to avenge the defeat he had received, but was again overthrown. In that battle one hundred and twenty thousand of the Syrians perished; the king was pardoned by Achaab, and his kingdom and former position were granted him. Then Achaab was reproved by the prophet in the words of God. For Achaab had abused the divine kindness, by sparing the enemy delivered up to him. The Syrian king, therefore, after three years, made war upon the Hebrews. Achaab, under the advice of some false prophet, went against the Syrian king. Achaab went forth to battle, after having both spurned the words of Michaias the prophet of God and cast him into prison. Indeed, Michaias the prophet had warned Achaab that the fight would prove disastrous to him. Thus, Achaab, after being slain in that battle, left the kingdom to his son Ochozias.⁸⁶

4 Kings, Chapter 1

Prophet Elias Encounters King Ochozias and His Captains of Fifty

Ochozias (Ahaziah, 850-849 B.C.) fell through the lattice that was in his upper chamber in Samaria, which ushered in injury and illness. What did this king contrive to do? He sent messengers, and said to them, "Go and inquire of Baalzebub (Baal fly),⁸⁷ the god of Ekron (Accaron), whether I shall recover of this my sickness." And they went forth to make inquiry in his behalf. An angel of the Lord called Elias the Thesbite, saying, "Arise, and go to meet the messengers of Ochozias king of Samaria, and thou shalt say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?' But it shall not be so. For thus saith the Lord, 'The

⁸⁶ *The Sacred History of Sulpitius Severus*, Bk. I, Ch. XLIV, Nicene and Post-Nicene, 2nd Ser., XI:92.

⁸⁷ The name Beelzebub is commonly explained after the Septuagint and Josephus [*Ant.* ix. 2, § 1], as the "Lord of Flies" or "Lord of things that fly" (*zebub* being a Hebrew collective noun for "fly").

bed on which thou art gone up, thou shalt not come down from it, for thou shalt surely die.'” And Elias went, and said so to them.⁸⁸

When the messengers returned to Ochozias and reported all to him, the king said, “What was the manner of the man who went up to meet you, and spoke to you these words?” And they said, “He was a hairy man, and girt with a leathern girdle about his loins.” The king then said, “This one is Elias the Thesbite.”⁸⁹

The king then sent to Elias a captain of fifty and his fifty men. He went to the prophet, who was then sitting on the top of a mountain. The captain spoke to the holy man, and said, “O man of God, the king has called thee, ‘Come down.’” But Elias answered the captain, saying, “And if I am a man of God, fire shall come down out of heaven and devour thee and thy fifty.” And fire, indeed, came down out of heaven and devoured him and his fifty. Following this episode, for a second time, the king sent another captain of fifty and his fifty men. This captain spoke to Elias, saying, “O man of God, thus says the king, ‘Come down quickly.’” Elias spoke to him, and repeated, “If I am a man of God, fire shall come down out of heaven and devour thee and thy fifty.” And fire, again, came down out of heaven and devoured him and his fifty. Ochozias did not relent. He sent another captain and his fifty men. Now this third captain went forth. He went on his knees before Elias, entreating him and saying, “O man of God, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thine eyes. Behold, fire came down from heaven and devoured the first two captains of fifty; and now, I pray, let my life be precious in thine eyes.” And the angel of the Lord spoke to Elias, and said, “Go down with him, be not afraid of them.” And Elias rose up, and went down with him to the king.⁹⁰ This third captain was the same man that Elias met previously, Obdios. Prophet Elias felt pity for Obdios and would not pray that he should be consumed. He observed how Obdios approached him humbly, and even prostrated himself so that he should not be burned as the other two captains of fifty with their men. Josephus says that “Elias accepted his discreet words and courteous behavior.”⁹¹ After the death of the king, thenceforth, Obdios left the imperial court. He followed Elias, ministering to him. Having become his disciple, Obdios prophesied much. He reposed in peace and was buried with his fathers.

⁸⁸ 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 1:2-4.

⁸⁹ 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 1:5-8.

⁹⁰ 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 1:9-15.

⁹¹ Flavius Josephus, “The Antiquities of the Jews,” *The Works of Josephus*, Bk. 9, Ch. 2, trans. by William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, February 1988), p. 246.

Prophet Elias spoke to the King Ochozias, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, 'Why hast thou sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zeebub, the god of Ekron? It shall not be so! The bed on which thou art gone up, thou shalt not come down from it; for thou shalt surely die.'"⁹² So Ochozias died according to the word of the Lord which Elias had spoken. And in the fifth year of Joram the son of Achaab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Juda, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Juda began to reign. He reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Achaab: for the daughter of Achaab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the Lord.⁹³ It was during his reign that Elias is related to have been taken up into heaven.⁹⁴

4 Kings, Chapter 2

Prophets Elias and Elissaios Enter Bethel and Jericho

It came to pass, when the Lord was going to take Elias with a whirlwind as it were into heaven, that Elias and Elissaios went out of Galgala.



Prophets Elias and Elissaios Cross the Jordan

Elias said to Elissaios, "Stay here, I pray thee; for God has sent me to Bethel." But Elissaios said, "As the Lord lives and thy soul lives, I will not leave thee." So they went together to Bethel in southern Judea. Then the prophets, those who were in Bethel, came to Elissaios and disclosed to him, "Dost thou know that the Lord this day is going to take thy lord away from thy head?" Elissaios answered, "Yea, I know it; be silent." Elias then said to Elissaios, "Stay here, I pray thee; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." Again, Elissaios responded: "As the Lord lives and thy soul lives, I will not leave thee." Therefore, they came together to Jericho.⁹⁵

⁹² 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 1:16.

⁹³ 2 Kgs. 8:16 KJV; 4 Kgs. 1:18 LXX.

⁹⁴ *The Sacred History of Sulpitius Severus*, Bk. I, Ch. XLV, Nicene, 2nd Ser., XI:93.

⁹⁵ 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 2:1-4.

As in Bethel, so it happened in Jericho to Elissaïos. The sons of the prophets, those who were in Jericho, drew near to Elissaïos, and said to him, “Dost thou know that the Lord is about to take away thy master today from thy head?” And he said, “Yea, I know it; hold your peace.” Elias then said to Elissaïos, “Stay here, I pray thee, for the Lord has sent me to Jordan.” Once more, Elissaïos responded: “As the Lord lives and thy soul lives, I will not leave thee.” Therefore, they both went on. Furthermore, fifty men of the sons of the prophets went along as well. They, however, stood facing them at a distance, while Elias and Elissaïos stood on the bank of the Jordan.⁹⁶



*Prophet Elissaïos takes up
the mantle of Prophet Elias.*

Prophets Elias and Elissaïos Cross the Jordan

Elias then removed his mantle. He wrapped it together, and next smote the water. The water, thereupon, was divided on this side and on that side. Following this, both Elias and Elissaïos went over on dry ground. It came to pass while they were crossing over, that Elias said to Elissaïos, “Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken up from thee.” Elissaïos said, “Let there be, I pray thee, a double portion of thy spirit upon me.” Elias remarked, “Thou hast asked a hard thing: if thou shalt see me when I am taken up from thee, then shall it be so to thee; and if not, it shall not be so.”⁹⁷

The holy Church chants: “Once the prophet made manifest the grace of Baptism in the divine Spirit, by striking the streams of Jordan with his mantle.”⁹⁸ And, “The river Jordan once turned back before the mantle of Elissaïos, left by Elias who had been taken up into heaven. The waters were divided, so that the stream became a dry path before him,⁹⁹ forming a true

⁹⁶ 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 2:5-7.

⁹⁷ 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 2:8-10.

⁹⁸ January 5th, Orthros Canon, Ode Five, Mode One.

⁹⁹ 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 2:14.

figure of the Baptism, whereby we pass over the changeful course of life. Christ has appeared in the Jordan to sanctify the waters.”¹⁰⁰

Prophet Elias is Taken up in a Whirlwind

As Elias and Elissaios were going along and talking—lo!—a chariot of



Prophet Elias is Taken Up

fire, and horses of fire, separated both of them. Elias was taken up in a whirlwind as it were into heaven. Elissaios was accounted worthy to behold this. He cried out, “Father, father, the chariot of Israel, and the horseman thereof!” After that, Elissaios saw Elias no more. Elissaios then took hold of his garments, and rent them into two pieces. Next, Elissaios took up the mantle of Elias, which fell from off Elias and upon himself. Thereafter, Elissaios returned. He stood upon the brink of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elias and smote the water, saying, “Where is the Lord God of Elias?” The waters then divided hither and thither; and Elissaios went over.

The sons of the prophets, those

from Jericho, who were standing on the opposite side, observed Elissaios. They exclaimed, “The spirit of Elias has rested upon Elissaios.” They went forth to meet Elissaios. They made obeisance to him to the ground.¹⁰¹

In today’s divine office, we hear: “Beholding the great iniquity of men and the great love of God for mankind, the Prophet Elias was troubled and grew wroth; and he addressed pitiless words to the merciful One, crying out, ‘Be Thou angered against them that deny Thee, O righteous Judge!’ But he did not move the compassion of the good One to torment them that deny Him, for He that alone loveth mankind doth ever await the repentance of all.”¹⁰² Since Elias could not endure iniquitous Israel, the Lord would bring him up that He might go down among them.

¹⁰⁰ January 5th, Dismissal Hymn of the Forefeast, Mode Four.

¹⁰¹ 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 2:11-15.

¹⁰² July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Oikos.

In a hymn to the Theotokos, the chariot of fire is a type of the Theotokos: "Rejoice, fiery chariot of God the Logos, O thou Queen of all!"¹⁰³ And, in acclaiming thee, O Theotokos, we cry, "Rejoice, O chariot of the noetic Sun!"¹⁰⁴

The chariot of fire and the horses of fire, according to Saint Kosmas, depict the tongues as of fire at Pentecost; and so the hymnographer writes for the Feast of Pentecost: "The fire-breathing zealot of old, who was joyously borne upon the fiery chariot that blazed furiously, indicated the inspiration which hath now shone from on high upon the apostles, wherewith they were enlightened and made the Trinity known unto all."¹⁰⁵

"The good disciple," says Saint Gregory the Great, "sees his master carried to the heavens, and cries out, 'Father, father, the chariot of Israel, and the horseman thereof [4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 2:12]!' Why is it that Elias is said to be the chariot and the driver of Israel, save that the driver drives and the chariot carries?... Therefore, the teacher who both sustains the conduct of the people through patience and instructs them in the words of Holy Writ is said to be both the chariot and the driver. The teacher is the chariot because he not only tolerates what he is carrying but also bears with the evils of the load. He is the driver because he not only exhorts but also disciplines the people with good admonitions."¹⁰⁶

The great Elias shows by his actions a mystery. Saint Maximos explains: "During his taking up, Elias gives Elissaios his mantle (that is, mortification of the flesh, in which the magnificence of the good moral order is firmly grounded). The mantle is an ally of the spirit in the struggle against any enemy force. It is as a blow against the unstable and flowing nature figured by the Jordan, so that the disciple should not be held back from crossing over to the holy land either by being swamped in the mud or by being prone to the slipperiness of the craving for matter.

"As for Elias he advances toward God, free and uncontrolled by any attachment to beings at all. He is simple in his desire and uncomplicated in his intention.... He knows that it is necessary for Christ's disciple to keep away from unequal dispositions whose differences prove an estrangement.... When he reaches the point of having life and movement and being in Christ, he has put far from him the monstrous origin of inequalities. He, therefore, no longer carries within himself the contrary dispositions of these passions.... In this

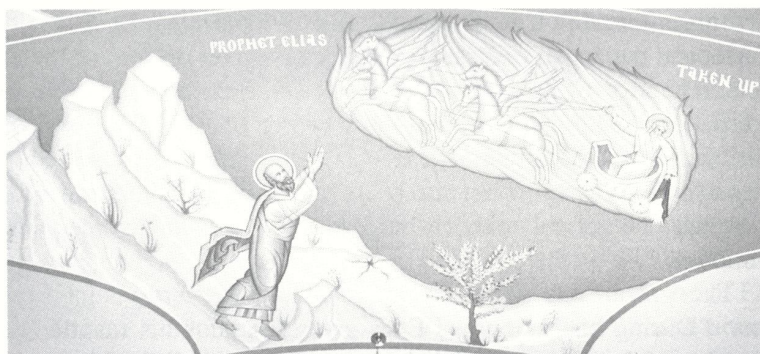
¹⁰³ Extract of the Canon of the Akathist, Ode Five, Mode Four.

¹⁰⁴ Extract of the Canon of the Akathist, Ode Seven, Mode Four.

¹⁰⁵ Sunday of Pentecost, Orthros Canon, Ode Nine, Grave Mode, by Saint Kosmas the Monk.

¹⁰⁶ Saint Gregory the Great (the Dialogist), *The Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great On the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Book II, "Hom. IX," p. 268.

way, he is not enslaved by the contrary dispositions of these passions, having remained aloof from their unstable fluctuations. In it the holiness of the divine image has been naturally included to persuade the soul to transform itself, by its free will, to the likeness of God. It persuades the soul to belong to the great kingdom which subsists substantially with God, the Father, of all. The soul becomes a radiant abode of the Holy Spirit and receives, if one can say it, the full power of knowing the divine nature insofar as this is possible. By this power there is discarded the origin of what is inferior, to be replaced by that of what is superior, while the soul like God keeps inviolable in itself by the grace of its calling the realization of the gifts which it has received. By this power is Christ born mysteriously and willingly, becoming incarnate through those who are saved."¹⁰⁷



Prophet Elias is Taken Up in a Whirlwind

During the Great Fast, we sing: "Riding in the chariot of the virtues, Elias was lifted up to heaven, high above earthly things. Reflect, O my soul, on his ascent."¹⁰⁸ Saint Theodore the Stoudite also exhorts us: "As Elias the Thesbite, let us fashion for ourselves from day to day, O brethren, a fiery chariot from the four great virtues."¹⁰⁹ Let us exalt our minds through freedom from the passions; let us arm our flesh with purity and our hands with acts of compassion; let us make our feet beautiful with the preaching of the Gospel; and let us put the enemy to flight and gain the victory."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Saint Maximus the Confessor, "Commentary on the Our Father," *Selected Writings*, The Classics of Western Spirituality, p. 109.

¹⁰⁸ *Triodion*, Monday in the First Week of the Great Fast, Great Compline, Ode Eight, Mode Plagal Two, by Saint Andrew of Crete.

¹⁰⁹ 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 2:11.

¹¹⁰ *Triodion*, Vespers on Sunday Evening of Sunday of Orthodoxy, Sticheron, Mode Plagal Two, by Saint Theodore the Stoudite.

The New Testament

Prophet Elias and Saint John the Baptist

Saint Justin the Martyr, in his *Dialogue* with Trypho the Jew, counters those that object that Elias has not yet come. He replies that Elias is the precursor of the first advent. "Is it not written in the Scripture," says Justin to Trypho, "'Behold, I will send to you Elias the Thesbite, before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes [Mal. 4:5]?"' Trypho answered, "Certainly." Justin continued: "If, therefore, Scripture compels you to admit that two advents of Christ were predicted to take place (one in which He would appear suffering, and dishonored, and without comeliness; but the other in which He would come glorious, and Judge of all, as indicated in many passages), shall we not suppose that the word of God has proclaimed that Elias shall be the precursor of the great and terrible day, that is, of His second advent?" Trypho again answered, "Certainly."

Saint Justin continued, "Accordingly, our Lord in His teaching, proclaimed that this very thing would take place, saying that Elias would also come. And we know that this shall take place when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come in glory from heaven. The Spirit of God, Who was in Elias, preceded as herald in the person of John, a prophet among your nation. Note that after John no other prophet appeared among you.... Also our Christ said, when He was on earth, to those who were affirming that Elias must come before Christ: 'But I say to you that Elias already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him as much as they wished [Mt. 17:12].' And it is written that the disciples understood that He spoke to them about John the Baptist." Trypho replied, "This statement also seems to me paradoxical; namely, that the prophetic Spirit of God, Who was in Elias, was also in John."... Justin explained: "It must be admitted that the same thing happened in the case of Jesus of Navee [Joshua], son of Nun, who succeeded Moses as the leader of thy people, when Moses was ordered to lay his hands on him, while God said, 'I will transfer some of the Spirit that is in thee to him.'¹¹¹ Therefore, as God took the Spirit that was in Moses, while the latter was among men, and put it on Jesus of Navee, so was He able to transfer the Spirit from Elias to John. As Christ appeared without glory at His first Advent, so also Elias in his first advent. Though the Spirit remained ever in the same state of purity in Elias, yet Elias, as in Christ's first advent, was perceived to be without glory."¹¹²

¹¹¹ Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9; cf. Num. 11:17 with the seventy elders.

¹¹² Saint Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch. XLIX, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, The Apostolic Fathers, Vol. I, pp. 219, 220; *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, trans. by Thomas B. Falls (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1977), FC, 3rd ed., VI: 223. No division of person took place. Elias lost nothing by the transmission.

Saint Chrysostom: "So He called John. In this sense Elias is come:¹¹³ but if thou wouldest seek the Thesbite, he is coming."¹¹⁴ ... "For the Scriptures speak of two advents of Christ, both this one that is past, and that one which is to come....Of the second, Elias will be forerunner. Of the first, John was forerunner, whom Christ called Elias, but this is because he was fulfilling the ministry of that prophet....Christ called John, Elias, on account of their community of ministration."¹¹⁵

Blessed Theophylact: "There are two comings of the Christ, both this one which took place and the one to come. John the Baptist was the forerunner of the first. Elias shall be the forerunner of the second. Christ calls John 'Elias,' because, like Elias, John was a reprover, a zealot, and a solitary in the desert."¹¹⁶

Saint Bede: "Just as Elias will precede Christ's second coming with great power of the Spirit, so John, gifted with no less might of the Spirit, preceded Christ's first coming; and just as Elias is going to be the Judge Christ's precursor, so John became Redeemer Christ's forerunner. Now there is also a similarity in their teaching,...and the work of both is one and the same—by their preaching, to pour into the minds of children the faith and the understanding which the fathers had."¹¹⁷

Saint Aphrahat compares the two prophets: "Our Lord testifies concerning John, that he is the greatest of the prophets. Yet he received the Spirit by limit; because in that measure in which Elias received the Spirit, (in the same) John obtained it. And as Elias used to dwell in the wilderness, so also the Spirit of God led John into the wilderness; and he used to dwell in the mountains and caves. The birds sustained Elias, and John used to eat locusts. Elias had his loins girded with a girdle of leather; so John had his loins girded with a cincture of leather. Jezebel persecuted Elias, and Herodias persecuted John. Elias reproved Achaab, and John reproved Herod. Elias divided the Jordan, and John opened up baptism. The Spirit...rested twofold upon Elissaios, so John laid his hand on our Redeemer, and He received the Spirit not by measure. Elias opened the heavens and ascended; and John saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and coming upon our Redeemer....Elissaios took the mantle of Elias, and our Redeemer

¹¹³ Mt. 17:11.

¹¹⁴ Saint Chrysostom, "Hom. 57," *P.G.* 58:576 (cols. 559).

¹¹⁵ Idem, "Hom. 56," *P.G.* 58:575, 576 (cols. 557-559).

¹¹⁶ Blessed Theophylact, *P.G.* 123:216A (col. 584).

¹¹⁷ Saint Bede, "Hom. II. 19, Vigil of the Nativity of John the Baptist," *Homilies on the Gospels*, Bk. Two, 199.

the imposition of the hand of the priests....Indeed, many are the signs that the Spirit of Christ wrought, which the prophets received from Him."¹¹⁸

Prophet Elias at the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Saint Leo declares: "Among two or three witnesses every word will stand."¹¹⁹ What is more stable and more firm than this saying in whose message the trumpet of the Old and of the New Testaments sound, and with whose Gospel teaching the records of the ancient pronunciations concur. Blessed John says that the law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ."¹²⁰

So, "Moses and Elias appear," observes Saint Ambrose, "namely the law and the prophet, with the Word, for neither the law nor a prophet can exist without the Word."¹²¹

"Now since men were continually accusing Christ," notes Saint Chrysostom, "of transgressing the law, and accounting Him to be a blasphemer, as appropriating to Himself a glory which belonged not to Him, He shows these charges spring from envy....He brings forward those who had shown out in each of these respects: Moses, because he gave the law,...and Elias for his part was jealous for the glory of God. If any man were an adversary to God, Elias was not the person to stand by and hearken to him. Also, this shows that He has power over both death and life, and rules both above and beneath. For this cause He brings forward him that had died, and him that never yet suffered this. There is another reason to show the disciples these things. What was it? To show the glory of the Cross, and to console Peter and the others in their dread of the Passion, and to raise up their minds."¹²²



The Transfiguration

¹¹⁸ Saint Aphrahat, "Demonstration VI.—Of Monks," § 13, *Select Demonstrations*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd Ser., XIII:371.

¹¹⁹ Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1; Mt. 18:16.

¹²⁰ Jn. 1:17. Saint Leo, "Sermon 51," FC, 93:221.

¹²¹ Saint Ambrose, Bk. VII, § 10.

¹²² Saint John Chrysostom, "Hom. 56," *P.G.* 58:566, 567 (cols. 550, 551).

Saint Kosmas, singing of Moses and Elias on Mount Tabor, composed these words: "Those with whom Thou hast conversed of old in fiery vapor, in darkness and the lightest of winds, stood before Thee in the manner of servants, O Christ our Master, and talked with Thee."¹²³ Glory to Thy power, O Lord!"¹²⁴

Today we chant: "The Thesbite and Moses the God-seer beheld in revelation on Tabor what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and what hath not entered into the hearts of earthborn men: the Lord Almighty, incarnate."¹²⁵ For, "On Tabor, Christ showed thee to be an initiate of the mystery of His divine incarnation, as thou wast an instiller of purity and a most divine offshoot of virginity, showing the unapproachable light of the Divinity in His body to thee."¹²⁶

Saint John of Damascus melodizes on the appearance of our Lord with His two prophets: "Being complete God, Thou hast become complete man, bringing together manhood and the complete Godhead in Thy Person which Moses and Elias saw on Mount Tabor in two natures."¹²⁷

Saint Ephraim, in his hymn, sings: "For Christ did Elias long, and when he saw not Christ on earth, Elias, through faith most thoroughly cleansed, mounted up in heaven to see Him. Moses saw Christ and Elias; the meek man from the depth ascended, the zealous from on high descended, and in the midst beheld the Son. They figured the mystery of His Advent: Moses was a type of the dead, and Elias a type of the living, that fly to meet Him at His coming."¹²⁸ For the dead that have tasted death, them He makes to be first: and the rest that are not buried, are last caught up to meet Him."¹²⁹

Persecution in the Lives of our Lord Jesus Christ and Prophet Elias

Saint Aphrahat demonstrates how persecution paralleled the lives of Christ and His prophet. "Elias also was persecuted as Jesus was persecuted. Jezebel the murderess persecuted Elias; and the persecuting and murderous congregation persecuted Jesus. Elias restrained the heavens from rain because of the sins of Israel; and Jesus by His coming restrained the Spirit from the prophets, because of the sins of the people. Elias destroyed the servants of

¹²³ Ex. 19:18,19; Deut. 4:11; 3 Kgs. (1 Kgs.) 19:12; Mt. 17:1-9.

¹²⁴ August 6th, The Transfiguration of our Lord, Orthros Canon, Ode Four, Mode Four, by Saint Kosmas.

¹²⁵ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode Nine, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

¹²⁶ July 20th, Prophet Elias, Orthros Canon, Ode 8, Mode Two, by John the Monk.

¹²⁷ August 6th, The Transfiguration of our Lord, Orthros Canon, Ode Three, Mode Plagal Four, by Saint John of Damascus.

¹²⁸ 1 Thess. 4:17.

¹²⁹ Saint Ephraim (Ephrem) Syrus, "Hymn I, On the Nativity," *Hymns and Homilies*, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd Ser., XIII:224.

Baal; and Jesus trampled upon Satan and his hosts. Elias raised to life the son of the widow; and Jesus raised to life the son of the widow, as well as Lazarus and the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue. Elias sustained the widow with a little bread; and Jesus satisfied thousands with a little bread. Elias was taken up in a chariot to heaven; and our Redeemer ascended and took His seat at the right of His Father. Elissaios received the Spirit from Elias; and Jesus breathed upon the faces of His apostles."¹³⁰

Saint Kyril of Jerusalem also compares their conduct of life: "Recall how Elias was taken ill, and how he mounted on high in a fiery chariot; but the chariot host of Christ is 'ten thousandfold, yea, thousands of them that abound in number [Ps. 67:18].' Recall that Elias was taken up to the east of the Jordan, but Christ ascended to the east of the brook Kedron.... Recall that Elias promised that a double portion in the Holy Spirit would be given to his holy disciple; but Christ granted so full a share of the Holy Spirit to His disciples that besides having the Holy Spirit themselves, by the laying on of hands, they communicated the Spirit to those who believed.

"When you have wrestled with the Jews and have overcome them by parallel examples, then come to the surpassing glory of the Savior: His predecessors were the servants, but He is the Son of God. You will be reminded of His preeminence when you reflect that a servant of Christ was caught up to the third heaven. For if Elias reached the first heaven but Paul the third, the latter surely attained to a more honorable dignity. Be not ashamed of your apostles; they are not inferior to Moses, or second to the prophets; but they are noble among the noble, and indeed, nobler still. For Elias, it is true, was taken up into heaven; but Peter has the keys to the kingdom of the heavens, after hearing the words: 'whatsoever thou shalt loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens [Mt. 16:19].' Elias was taken up to heaven only, but Paul into heaven and Paradise (for it was but fitting that the disciples of Jesus should receive more manifold grace) and 'heard unspeakable words, which it is not allowed for a man to speak [2 Cor. 12:4].'"¹³¹

Prophet Elias and the Antichrist

In speaking on the coming of Antichrist, Saint John of Damascus notifies us of the following: "First, it is necessary that the Gospel should be preached among all nations;¹³² 'and then the lawless one shall be re-

¹³⁰ Saint Aphrahat, "Demonstration XXI—Of Persecution," §14, Nicene, 2nd Ser., XIII:398.

¹³¹ Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, "Catechesis XIV(25-26)," *The Words of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*, FC, 64:49, 50.

¹³² Cf. Mt. 24:14.

vealed.¹³³ ...The devil himself, therefore, does not become man in the way that the Lord was made Man. God forbid! But Antichrist shall become man as the offspring of fornication, and shall receive all the energy of Satan. For God, foreknowing the choice that he would make, allows the devil to take up his abode in him."¹³⁴

Now, "He is, as we said, the offspring of fornication and is nurtured in secret, and on a sudden he rises up and rebels and assumes rule....In the beginning of his rule, or rather tyranny, he assumes the role of sanctity. But when he becomes master, he persecutes the Church of God and displays all his wickedness. But he will come 'with signs and lying wonders [2 Thess. 2:9],' fictitious and not real; and he will deceive and lead away from the living God those whose minds rest on an unsound and unstable foundation, so that even the elect, if it be possible, shall be made to stumble."¹³⁵ But Enoch¹³⁶ and Elias the Thesbite shall be sent and shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,¹³⁷ that is, the Synagogue to our Lord Jesus Christ and the preaching of the apostles. But they shall be slain by him. And the Lord shall come out of heaven, just as the holy apostles beheld Him—perfect God and perfect Man—going into heaven with glory and power;¹³⁸ and He will destroy the man of the lawlessness, the son of the perdition, 'by the breath of His mouth [2 Thess. 2:8].' Let no one, therefore, look for the Lord to come from earth, but out of heaven, as He Himself has made sure."¹³⁹

¹³³ 2 Thess. 2:8.

¹³⁴ Saint John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Bk. IV, Ch. XXVI, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd Ser., IX:98, 99.

¹³⁵ Mt. 24:24.

¹³⁶ Enoch was the son of Jared and the father of Methuselah. He was well-pleasing to God [Gen. 5:24]. This man was raised to heaven by pleasing God [Irenaeos, 4:15, sec. 2]. It is written of Enoch: "Enoch was well-pleasing to God, and was not found, because God translated him [Gen. 5:24]." His translation was a sudden removal from mortality to immortality without death. His years, 365, were fewer, than his predecessors, yet he begat sons and daughters. The Apostle Jude, brother of the Lord, writes: "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came amidst myriads of His saints, to do judgment against all, and to convict all the impious among them for all their works of impiety which they did impiously, and for all the hard things which impious sinners spoke against Him [Jude 1:14, 15].'" Enoch is a member of the antediluvian generation, whereas Elias is of the postdiluvian generation. Our two prophets shall witness before Christ in their own persons to the truth of the resurrection of the body and its existence in the heavens.

¹³⁷ Mal. 4:6; Rev. 11:3.

¹³⁸ Acts 1:11.

¹³⁹ Saint John of Damascus, *Exposition*, IX:99.

Saint Hippolytos writes: "Daniel says, 'And one week shall establish the covenant with many: and in the midst of the week My sacrifice and drink-offering shall be taken away [Dan. 9:27].' By one week, therefore, he meant the last week which is to be at the end of the world—of which week the two Prophets Enoch and Elias will take up the half. For they will preach 1,260 days, proclaiming repentance to the people and to all the nations.... Prophet Malachias also writes: 'Behold, I will send to you Elias the Thesbite, before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes, who shall turn again the heart of the father to the son, and the heart of a man to his neighbor, lest I come and smite the earth grievously [Mal. 4:5, 6].' These shall come and proclaim the manifestation of Christ that is to be from heaven. They shall also perform signs and wonders that men may be put to shame and turned to repentance for their surpassing wickedness and impiety."¹⁴⁰

Saint Gregory the Dialogist: "When Enoch and Elias preach, many of the Jews who then remain faithless will return to recognition of the truth; as it is said of that same Elias, 'Elias, indeed, cometh first and shall restore all things [Mt. 17:11].' These two are named the two olive trees by Zacharias,¹⁴¹ and the two candlesticks by John."¹⁴²

With regard to the mark or the number of the beast,¹⁴³ Saint Hippolytos warns us: "In the time of that hater of all good, of such a kind will be the seal, the tenor of which will be this: 'I deny the Maker of heaven and earth, I deny the Baptism, I deny my (former) service; and I attach myself to thee, and I believe in thee.' But this is what the Prophets Enoch and Elias will preach: 'Believe not the enemy who is to come and be seen; for he is an adversary and corrupter and son of perdition, and deceives you.'

"For this reason he will kill you, and smite them with the sword. Behold the deceit of the enemy! Know the machinations of the beguiler, how he seeks to darken the mind of men utterly! For he will show forth his demons brilliant like angels, and he will bring in hosts without number of those who are incorporeal. And in the presence of all he exhibits himself as taken up into heaven with trumpets and sounds, and the mighty shouting of those who hail

¹⁴⁰ Saint Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, ¶¶ 43, 46, Fathers of the Third Century, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, V:213.

¹⁴¹ Zach. 4:3.

¹⁴² Rev. 11:4. Saint Gregory the Dialogist, "Hom. XII," *The Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great On the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, p. 144.

¹⁴³ None shall be able "to buy or sell except the one having the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name [Rev. 13:17]." Saint John saw the souls of those who made obeisance neither to the beast nor to his image, "and did not receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years [Rev. 20:4]."

him with indescribable hymns. The heir of darkness will also exhibit himself shining like light: and at one time soaring to the heavens; and at another descending to the earth with great glory; and again charging the demons, like angels, to execute his behests with much fear and trembling. Then will he send the cohorts of the demons among mountains and caves and dens of the earth, to track out those who have been concealed from his eyes, and to bring them forward to worship him. And those who yield to him he will seal with his seal; but those who refuse to submit to him he will consume with incomparable pains and bitterest torments and machinations, such as never have been, nor have reached the ear of man, nor have been seen by the eye of mortals.

“Blessed shall they be who overcome the tyrant then. For they shall be set forth as more illustrious and loftier than the first witnesses; for the former witnesses overcame his minions only, but these overthrow and conquer the accuser himself, the son of perdition. With what eulogies and crowns, therefore, will they not be adorned by our King, Jesus Christ!”¹⁴⁴

Saint John Chrysostom informs us that “Elias will then come to give confidence to the faithful, and this Christ says, ‘Elias indeed cometh first and shall restore all things [Mt. 17:11].’ Therefore it is said, ‘in the spirit and power of Elias [Lk. 1:17].’ For John wrought neither signs nor wonders, as did Elias. For John, it is said, did no miracle, but all things which John spoke of this Man were true. How then was it ‘in the spirit and power of Elias’? That is, John will take upon him the same ministry. As the one was the forerunner of His first Coming, so will the other be of His second and glorious Coming; and for this Elias is reserved. Let us not therefore fear. Christ has calmed the minds of the hearers. He causes them no longer to think present things dreadful but worthy of thankfulness.”¹⁴⁵

Let us hear what Saint Ephraim foretells: “Enoch and Elias shall be sent that they may confute the evil one, by a question filled with mildness. Coming to him, the holy men, that they may expose the son of perdition before the multitudes round about him, will say, ‘If thou art God, show us what we now ask of thee. In what place do the men of old, Enoch and Elias, lie hidden?’ Then the evil one will at once answer the holy men, ‘If I wish to seek for them in heaven, in the depths of the sea, every abode lies open to me. There is no other God but me; and I can do all things in heaven and earth.’ They shall answer the son of perdition, ‘If thou art God, call the dead, and they will rise up. For it is written in the books of the prophets, and also by the

¹⁴⁴ “Appendix to the Works of Hippolytos,” §§ XXIX-XXX, Ante-Nicene, V:249, 250.]

¹⁴⁵ Saint John Chrysostom, “Hom. IV, on 2 Thessalonians 2:10,” Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 1st Ser., Vol. XIII (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

apostles, that Christ, when He shall appear, will raise the dead from their tombs. If thou dost not show us this, we shall conclude that He Who was crucified is greater than thee; for He raised the dead, and was Himself raised to heaven in great glory.' In that moment the evil one, angered against the saints, will seize the sword, and the most abominable one will sever the necks of the just men."¹⁴⁶

We read in the Book of Revelation: "And I will give to My witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, having been clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and two lampstands, the ones standing before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone doth wish to injure them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies. And if anyone doth wish to injure them, in this manner it is necessary for him to be killed. These have authority to shut the heaven, so that the rain may not moisten in the days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague as often as they wish. And whenever they finish their testimony, the beast, the one ascending out of the abyss, shall make war against them and shall overcome them and shall kill them. And their fall shall be upon the broad street of the city, the great one, which is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And they of the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do look upon their fall three and a half days, and shall not allow their corpses to be put into a sepulcher. And the ones dwelling on the earth rejoice over them; and they shall make merry and shall send gifts to one another, because these, the two prophets, tormented those dwelling on the earth. And after three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those looking at them. And I heard a loud voice out of the heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' And they ascended into the heaven in the cloud, and their enemies looked at them [Rev. 11:3-12]."

Saint Hippolytus here speaks of the deaths of Elias and Enoch: "He shall kill them because they will not give glory to Antichrist. For this is meant by the little horn that grows up. He, being now elated in heart, begins to exalt himself, and to glorify himself as God, persecuting the saints and blaspheming Christ, even as Daniel¹⁴⁷ says."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Saint Ephraim Syri, III, col. 188, Sermo II, "Sermon on Antichrist and the End and Consummation," in Toal's *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1959).

¹⁴⁷ Dan. 7:8, 21.

¹⁴⁸ Saint Hippolytus, "Treatise on Christ and Antichrist," ¶ 47, Ante-Nicene, V:213, 214.

Saint Ephraim continues: "After the killing of Enoch and Elias, Gabriel and Michael, the leaders of the heavenly hosts, shall leap up and descend to restore the saints to life. The angels shall approach and seize the accursed one. In the same moment the Lord shall command from His heavens, and He shall overthrow the accursed and all his forces. And on the instant the angels shall thrust them down to Gehenna. And all who believed in him shall be thrust down amid the flames. Then the Lord shall descend from on high, amid the fearful glory of the angels, and His chariot shall halt between heaven and earth. He shall speak to the sea and it shall dry up, and the fish shall die in the midst of it. The heavens and the earth shall be dissolved, and become darkness and gloom. The Lord shall send fire upon the earth, continuing for forty days, and shall purify it from iniquity, and from the pollution of sin."¹⁴⁹

"Ye faithful, with hymns let us all praise Elias the Thesbite, the wellspring of miracles and adornment of prophets; for, being immortal while yet in the flesh, as a mortal he assureth us of the resurrection of the dead."¹⁵⁰



Prophet Elias

**On the 20th of July,
the holy Church
commemorates
the Consecration
of the Church
dedicated to
the honorable
FORERUNNER
at the holy and luminous
Stoudios Monastery.**

Through the intercessions
of Thy Saints,
O Christ God,
have mercy on us.
Amen.

¹⁴⁹ Saint Ephraim Syri, III, col. 188, Sermo II, "Sermon on Antichrist and the End and Consummation," *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, IV:355-358.

¹⁵⁰ July 20th Prophet Elias, extract of Orthros Sedalen, Mode Plagal Four.