

ELIJAH @ ZAREPHATH

1Kings 17:7-24

Last time we left Elijah by the brook . We saw how God looked after him by providing food via ravens and water from the brook. Now a time has come that the brook has dried up. The drought judgment he has pronounced on Israel also affects him. What is he to do ?

The brook dries up, but God never runs dry. God has already arranged a new home for Elijah, in Zarephath, about 130 kilometers north-west from the brook.

The man of God will move from one place of testing to another. Elijah's training for greater service is not over. He has completed one full year in God's school of faith, at Cherith – Ravine, now he must do two more years at Zarephath before graduating.

He goes from Cherith, *the "cutting place"* to Zarephath, which means "*crucible,*" a place of refining.

It is indeed a place where God can prove His power and love even more. Elijah's faith has matured , but it must be further tested . Precious faith , like precious gold , must go through refining fires.

God can always prove Himself best , where there is nothing. God uses a poor, Canaanite widow in Zarephath of Sidon. Sidon is where Baal lived. Sidon is the place where Jezebel come from , a dangerous and unfriendly place, where the effects of drought are also noticeable. That is where God leads Elijah.

In that place of great idolatry, God wants to further form His servant. But God will do more . He will bring the widow to saving faith, through Elijah's ministry.

A Divine Encounter (Vs 10-16)

Elijah without hesitation obeys God's word and walks 130 kms across Israel to get to Zarephath . At the gate of the city Elijah meets the widow , carrying sticks and asks her a question , “ *Wound you bring me some water .*” By asking he wanted to know if she is the woman the LORD intended to provide for him. By her compliance , he knew she was the one.

Surely Elijah wondered how a widow could provide for him, let alone a Gentile woman as this was outside the territory of God's people. Widows were seen as the ones who were disadvantaged, and this widow was definitely needy. When Elijah met her, she was gathering sticks to cook her last meal.

Elijah requests of the widow, hospitality is required for strangers, yet did Elijah know he was asking for her last supplies? The widow is honest with Elijah and tells him of her situation.

“As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die (v12).

She did recognize Elijah as a prophet for she starts her response in verse 12 with “*As surely as the Lord you God ...*” Notice that she does not say “my God” as the LORD is not yet her God; perhaps she worships Baal? Soon, she would see the power of Elijah's God.

“But Elijah said to her, *“Don’t be afraid!”* Go ahead and cook that ‘last supper,’ but bake me a little loaf of bread first. Afterward there will still be enough food for you and your son.

For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: There will always be plenty of flour and oil left in your containers until the time when the LORD sends rain, and the crops grow again!” (17:13-14)

The woman is required to place faith in Elijah’s God. This is a severe test. Elijah is asking to be fed first. When she goes ahead and follows Elijah’s words, she is blessed with the miraculous provision of daily supplies: *“For no matter how much they used, there was always enough left in the containers, just as the LORD had promised through Elijah”* (17:16).

Day after day , there was flour and there was oil . Day after day we are to trust God for our provisions . He will give us our daily bread .

This is what God wants: that we go to the Lord Jesus with the little we have. It is, as someone once said, *“Little becomes much if God stands behind it.”*

We see that also with the miraculous feeding. What do a few loaves and a few fish mean to so many thousands of people (John 6:9)? Give it to the Lord. He distributes it so that everyone may be satisfied and there even remain for others (Matthew 14:20).

The flour and oil are multiplied. This multiplication takes place by using the flour and the oil. The woman experiences the truth of the word: *“There is one who scatters, and [yet] increases all the more”* (Proverbs 11:24). The opposite is also true.

There may be plenty, but when used for one’s own benefit, God will blow in it and it becomes little (Proverbs 11:24; Haggai 1:9; Haggai 2:17).

We can apply the flour and the oil spiritually. The flour can be seen as a picture of the Lord Jesus as Man. Flour is used for the grain offering (Leviticus 2:1). . Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27).

The Man Christ Jesus, who is God revealed in the flesh, was completely guided by the Spirit on earth. The Lord Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) and anointed with Him (Acts 10:38).

The grain offering is also exposed to fire (Leviticus 2:2; Leviticus 2:9; Leviticus 2:14). In it we see the picture that He, the true Man devoted to God, has undergone on the cross, the fire of God's judgment.

A Sudden Death (Vs 17-18)

Things are going along well, though each day requires new faith in God's providence; but then, disaster strikes – the woman's son takes ill and dies.

It is not only a trial for woman, but also for Elijah. This profoundly dramatic event brings the woman to a renewed awareness of God's hand in her life.

She looks at the death of her son as condemnation at the hand of God. She is reminded of a sin, the burden of which she apparently had not yet lost. What sin it was, we are not told. Maybe it had to do something with the child's birth. Whatever amount of guilt she felt, her conscience had been awakened.

That may happen to us. There are things that happen in which we suddenly find ourselves in God's presence. We suddenly become aware of God and sin.

Through a sudden incident, God can bring us to a standstill and immediately brings us to mind a sin that we have committed, but which

we have hidden or forgotten and which we have not yet confessed. God works this out to give the opportunity to confess that sin.

The widow is distraught; she blames Elijah. *“O man of God, what have you done to me? Have you come here to punish my sins by killing my son?”* (17:18).

Think about what her perception of God is at this point. Elijah was living in this widow’s house; surely, he spoke to her about his God. She has seen God as a provider of food. She can accept that.

But is this a God of vengeance? Is God only a “little” God, who can provide flour and oil, but not keep her son from dying? She hasn’t yet developed a real relationship with God. She can accept that fact that He is a Sustainer, but as yet to see and believe in Him as the Giver of life.

Elijah listens to her and only says to her: *“Give me your son.”* Elijah takes the son from her arms. He disconnects the boy from the natural connection that exists between the boy and his mother. His mother cannot help him anymore.

All the natural things on which a person can rely must first be taken away if God is to do His work through His life-giving power.

Elijah takes the son and brings him to the upper room to pray over him. Later the woman in Shunem also brought her son to an upper room (2 Kings 4:21); there the believers also laid Dorcas (Acts 9:37); there Eutychus was also brought back after he fell out of the window of the upper room (Acts 20:8-2 Kings :).

An upper room is a place above the earth, where those who are there are with God as it were. Elijah puts him on his bed, his deathbed, so to speak.

At first his prayer is one of disbelief over the incident: *“O LORD my God, why have you brought tragedy on this widow who has opened her home to me, causing her son to die?”* (17:20). Then he pleads with God, *“O LORD my God please let this child's life return to him”* (17:21).

Then he stretches himself upon him, making himself one with him symbolically. He identifies with boy. He does that up to three times. Every new life is based on the fact that the Lord Jesus made our problem of sin His on the cross. Our death became His death .

The act of stretching himself upon the child 3 times could speak of Christ's resurrection from the dead on the third day .

A Miraculous Resurrection (Vs 19-24)

Elijah prays fervently to God to let life return to the child. Before this event we do not read of anyone who has been brought back to life from the dead. Elijah is the first. This makes Elijah's faith in God as the God of the resurrection even more remarkable.

It would have been impossible for God to answer Elijah's prayer for the raising of the boy unless God in His foreknowledge would absolutely, and all certainty raise Jesus from the dead for our justification as the first- fruit from the dead.

When Elijah calls to God as his personal God, *“ My God”* , God listens to the voice of Elijah and brings outcome. He restores life and thus confirms Elijah as the man who restores things.

Elijah gives the child back to its mother. He is the prophet who restores the relationship between the generations and makes the hearts of parents go to the children and the hearts of children to the parents (Malachi 4:5).

Elijah's actions serve as a witness to help the widow come to know God more fully. *"Then the woman told Elijah, Now I know for sure that you are a man of God, and that the LORD truly speaks through you"* (17:24).

The woman addresses Elijah with "man of God" and believes that the Lord spoke through Elijah. Now through him she gets to know God in a special way: as the God of resurrection. She believed by faith that the Lord God was not only the God of the Jews but the God of the Gentiles too.

Luke 4:25 -26— Jesus aroused the wrath of the Jews when he referenced this occasion, implying that a prophet is not honored in his hometown.

The prideful Jews were furious, because they understood that the God of Israel was also the God of the Gentiles, and He was willing to save them.

Elijah in the widow's house is a picture of the Lord Jesus through whom we learn to know God as the God of resurrection and new life. Therefore the death of the child, as well as later that of Lazarus (John 11:4), becomes a reason to glorify God and to honor His prophet.