

Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

CHAPTER 17.

¹ Elijah, having prophesied against Ahab, is sent to Cherith, where the ravens feed him. ² H²: is sent to the widow of Zarephath. ³ He raiseth the widow's son. ⁴ The woman believeth him.

AND ¹ Elijah the Tishbite, ² who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, ³ As the LORD God of Israel liveth, ⁴ before whom I stand, ⁵ there shall not be dew nor rain ⁶ these years, but according to my word.

² And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

³ Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

⁴ And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

⁵ So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

⁶ And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

⁷ And it came to pass ⁸ after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

⁸ ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

⁹ Arise, get thee to ¹⁰ Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

v1 Elijah presents before Ahab

Elijah always identifies with **God's Word**. He was a man totally **bound up** in the message he brought. **Gilead** was a wild, tough place, a place of refuge. Gileadites were tough people: **1 Chron 12v8; Josh 17v1**. Gilead was a place where you had time to develop a **relationship** with God.

No rain - See notes below right.

v2-7 Elijah at the Brook Cherith

v5 Elijah accepted God unquestionably **v6** Elijah went to Cherith to **prepare him** for converting the widow. Why choose a raven? Because it is unclean and has trouble feeding its young: **Lev 11v3-4; Job 38v41**. The widow was represented by the ravens. She was a Gentile who struggled to feed her young. Peter also had to learn that what God has cleansed, they were not to call unclean: **Acts 10v12-15**.

v7 Brook drying up an incredible trial for Elijah. Imagine being in these circumstances! **"after a while"** - some suggest this means a full year.

v8-16 The Widow of Zarephath

Again Elijah is moved by God's Word.

Zarephath - Heb. "refinement, a place of smelting". This was to be a fiery trial to test Elijah and the widow, **1 Pet 1v7**.

Zidon - Heb. "catching fish". Elijah would become a fisher of men by converting the widow. Think of the reasons not to go: **1** It was a long journey, about 140km in a time of drought, **2** it was Jezebel's home town, **3** the woman may have been an idolator, **4** how would a widow sustain Elijah anyway?, **5** and how would Elijah find her? Nevertheless Elijah is a man of great faith. But his mind had been so conditioned that he goes unquestionably.

Luke 4v24-26: Key Quote! Jesus uses the widow of Zarephath as an example of great faith. See also Jesus' conversation with the Syro-phenician woman in **Mark 7**.

v12 handful of meal - the *minchar* offering, given to Yahweh to acknowledge that God gives all blessings: **Lev 2v2; 5v12; 6v15; 9v 17**.

Would we give Elijah food if we were in that situation?

v17-24 Death and Resurrection of the Widow's Son

v18 All she had left was her son and now he is gone. The widow acknowledges her sin. Similar to the resurrection of the Shunammite woman's son in **2 Kgs 4v1-37**.

Elijah's prayer to withhold the rain: See **James 5v16-17**. Elijah's fervent prayer was answered by God. He prayed that it would not rain for 3½ years. The reason being that there was apostasy in Israel: **Deut 11v16-17**. The lack of rain represented a spiritual drought and should have taught Israel to seek Yahweh. Rain is a symbol of God's Word: **Deut 32v2-3; Ps 72v6**. Jesus Christ was **a root growing out of dry ground** in similar circumstances: **Isa 11v1-5; 53v1-2**. The **3½ years** is typical of **our Lord's ministry**, a time of **trial and suffering**.

Colour code: Blue (God & Jesus); Red (sin/devil/judgment of wicked); Green (Kingdom); Orange (important words & phrases); Purple (return of Jews to the land); Yellow (practical exhortation).

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Much of this summary was prepared from notes and talks by Bro John Martin.

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¹⁰ So he arose and went to ¹¹ Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there ¹² gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

¹¹ And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

¹² And she said, ¹³ As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am ¹⁴ gathering ¹⁵ two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

¹³ And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

¹⁴ For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD ¹⁵ sendeth rain upon the earth.

¹⁵ And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat ¹⁶ many days.

¹⁶ And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake ¹⁷ by Elijah.

¹⁷ ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.

¹⁸ And she said unto Elijah, ¹⁹ What have I to do with thee, O thou ²⁰ man of God? art thou come unto me to ²¹ call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

¹⁹ And he said unto her, Give

me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a ²² loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

²⁰ And ²¹ he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?

²¹ And he ²² stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come ²³ into him again.

²² And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he ²⁴ revived.

²³ And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the ²⁴ chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

²⁴ ¶ And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this ²⁵ I know that thou art a ²⁶ man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

v20-21 Elijah is a **man of prayer** who trusts God. Elijah identifies himself with the boy by lying upon him. **Jesus does this** by touching people and entering in to their feelings when he healed them.

v24 This woman is converted to the Truth. The greatest work of Elijah's first advent. Converting people takes **time**. It requires us to have a **relationship** with people. The **least spectacular work** of Elijah's life was the most effective. There is a **real lesson** in this for us! God is with us no matter how "insignificant" our work in the truth may **appear**.

Application in life of Jesus: Jesus continually alludes to the life of Elijah in **Luke 12** when he is asked by a man to sort out a monetary dispute with his brother. He refers to Elijah's life in **Luke 12v22,24,35,42,49,54**. **What is the message for us?**

"A man's life does not consist of things which he possesses!"

Believers in the Dark Ages: **Rev 11v1-7:** God's witnesses in the middle ages prophesy for symbolic 3½ years - **Rev 11** uses the language of Elijah: "power to shut heaven that it rain not". Believers suffered terrible trials when the Roman Catholic Church (Jezebel) controlled Europe and persecuted the saints. **Christ's ministry was 3½ years**.

So the symbolic 1260 day period speaks of believers who are **"in Christ"** following in Christ's footsteps: **1 Pet 2v21**. Whenever we read of this time period in **Daniel** or **Revelation**, it speaks of a time of **suffering** and **trial**. Elijah's life was one of trial and struggle in the face of terrible apostasy and evil in Israel. So it has been for believers through all ages.

If we suffer with our Lord, we shall reign with him: 2 Tim 2v12; Col 3v 4. If we witness for Christ now, we will witness for him in the Kingdom age.

During a time of **false religion** and **deceit**, it is vital that Elijah learns to be a **FATHER** for Israel, to protect, care, nurture: **Deut 11v16-20; Isa 40v11**. Elijah learnt that lesson. His was **educated** through personal experience **to be like Yahweh**. To **care for** and **feed God's ecclesia** in difficult times and to build **relationships** with others so they are encouraged.