

ELIJAH AND THE BARREL OF MEAL

BIBLE TEXT : I Kings 16:29-34; 17:1-24.

LESSON 1296 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine" (Psalm 33:18, 19).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Kings 16:29-34

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

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

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

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

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

³⁴ In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest *son* Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

1 Kings 17:1-24

¹ And Elijah the Tishbite, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Wicked Reign of Ahab

1. Ahab's wickedness exceeds that of all kings of Israel prior to him, I Kings 16:29-34.

2. Elijah, a man of prayer, reproves Ahab, I Kings 17:1;
James 5:17 -18

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

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

II God's Protection of and Provision for Elijah

1. Elijah is fed by the ravens, I Kings 17:2-7;

Luke 12:24

²⁴ Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?

Psalm 147:9

⁹ He giveth to the beast his food, *and* to the young ravens which cry.

Matthew 6:25-33

²⁵ Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

²⁶ Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

²⁷ Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

²⁸ And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

²⁹ And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

³⁰ Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he not* much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?

³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

2. Elijah is provided for in the widow's home, I Kings 17:8-16;
Matthew 10:41-42

⁴¹ He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

⁴² And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these

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

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

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

¹² And she said, *As* the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I

little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Luke 4:25

²⁵ **But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;**

Luke 4:26

²⁶ **But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.**

3. Elijah raises the widow's son from the dead, I Kings 17:17-24.

NOTES:

Baal-Worship

When Jeroboam the son of Nebat made two golden calves and proclaimed, "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," and made Israel to sin by committing idolatry, it would seem that he had reached the height of effrontery to the Almighty God. Yet to Ahab it seemed but a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam. He sinned still more by introducing Baal-worship into Israel, with all its immoral and murderous practices. Israel was now committing sins for which God had decreed destruction upon the Canaanites. The priests of Baal were nothing more than murderers, for Baal-worship demanded the sacrifice of infants.

Elijah's Passion

It is no wonder that Elijah was concerned about Israel; he knew the curse that was pronounced in the Law against Israel because of these sins. He read that the Lord would shut up the heavens and withhold His rain if they failed to hearken unto His commandments. He felt now was the time and that something ought to be done about the conditions in Israel; and "he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (James 5:17). Elijah carried a burden for his people; he wanted to see Israel return to the Lord at any cost. It mattered not what inconvenience or deprivation or suffering it might cause him, so long as Baal-worship was stamped out. He was willing to take his place and suffer along with those who had sinned, if only God would call a halt to their evil ways. The world today needs men and women who, like Elijah, have a deep passion for seeing others turned from their sins.

Standing in the Presence of God

"As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (I Kings 17:1). This was indeed a bold declaration for mortal man to make – saying that by his word the heavens would give or withhold its rain. This statement was not made on the spur of the moment, but it was backed by hours of earnest, prevailing prayer. Such words came not from vain desires but from a holy contact with the living God.

The phrase, "As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand," shows that Elijah lived and walked as though he was always in the presence of the living God. We today should always be conscious of the fact that God knows our every word and thought and that our actions are weighed by Him. Let every man, woman, and child know that every minute of the hour and every

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 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 *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 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, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to 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 loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

²⁰ And 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 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 into him again.

hour of the day he is standing in the presence of the Almighty God.

At the Brook Cherith

What would Elijah find at the brook Cherith? Was there a hut, or a cave? or was he to dwell under the canopy of heaven? This was not Elijah's concern; he was in the place that God had told him to go. "Thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

The ravens! What fare would this be! What could the ravens bring that would be fit food for the man of God? The Bible states: "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn" (Luke 12:24). These are the birds that are going to bring Elijah his daily food. Surely it was a life of faith that God was demanding of Elijah, but Elijah had faith. God fed the ravens, and the ravens fed Elijah. What mattered how, or where, so long as God was Source of it. "Life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment" (Luke 12:23). "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry" (Psalm 34:15). The God of Elijah still lives, and so do ravens. What is lacking today is the **faith** of Elijah.

Elijah's faith was tried. The brook dried up! It was not enough that he should wait upon the birds for his daily bread, but the brook from which he drank dried up, even the brook Cherith to which God had sent him. Elijah did not question, but waited by the dry stream bed until "the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

The Widow of Zidon

Zarephath was not a land of plenty; the widow was not a rich woman. Yonder she goes gathering a few sticks. Can you imagine how you would feel if you were sent to board at a home where a woman and her son faced starvation with only enough food left for one scant meal and no prospects for the future? Would you have the courage to ask, "Make me . . . a little cake first"? or the faith to say: "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, unto the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth"? Or would you expect a starving mother to give bread to a stranger when her own son was in dire need? She had watched and rationed the dwindling oil and meal for days. And now it was down to one cup of meal and a few spoonfuls of oil!

No wonder that the Lord Jesus Christ could exclaim: "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sareptha, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow" (Luke 4:25, 26).

Here was a woman of rare virtue; one who was willing to obey God in the face of starvation and death. God looked upon the widows of Israel, but found none He could trust as He could this stranger of Sidon. As God looks over the Church today, is He finding there the virtues that He loves? Or need He call a stranger to feed His prophet? "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies" (Proverbs 31:10).

The widow of Zarephath may have heard of the God of Israel before the coming of Elijah. God told Elijah, "I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." A knowledge of the God

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

²³ And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the 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 I know that thou *art* a man of God, *and* that the word of the LORD in thy mouth *is* truth.

who had sustained Israel through forty years' wandering in the desert, feeding them on angels' food, and bringing them water out of the rock, should encourage a trust in the heart of anyone. However, it is one thing to believe that God can and has performed miracles, and still another thing to trust Him when it comes to the supreme issue – a life and death matter – involving ourselves or our children. The promises of God stand sure. The words, "For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail," are followed with, "And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail." Great is our God!

Life from the Dead

Once again Elijah's faith was put into the fire, and came forth refined as silver and gold. This time the woman's son became sick and died. Into his room went Elijah, and with the dead child upon the Prophet's bed, he cried unto God. Three times he stretched himself upon the child, and "the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." What a man is this! And what faith this is that can call the dead to life!

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Ahab's wife?
2. From what country did she come? and what was her religion?
3. Why did Elijah pray that it would not rain?
4. How was Elijah to get his food when he dwelt by the brook Cherith?
5. What caused the brook to dry up?
6. In what country was Zerephath?
7. In what connection did Jesus mention this widow of Zerephath?
8. What two miracles were performed in the widow's house?
9. Name several ways, brought out in this lesson, in which Elijah's faith could have been tried.
10. What convinced the widow that Elijah was a man of God?