

I. Intro

A. Text: **1 Kings 17:1-7**

¹ And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." ² Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ³ "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. ⁴ And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." ⁵ So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. ⁶ The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. ⁷ And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. (1 Kings 17:1-7)

B. Context

1. Crucial Time in the Nation:
2. Northern Kingdom split from the Southern Kingdom.
 - a. Apostasy was running rampant
 - i. Very difficult to find those who were still serving the true and living God.
 - ii. Everyone in the Northern Kingdom seemed to serve Baal (the god of the sky and weather).
3. Ahab: the apostate king of the North
 - a. Took idolatry and self-centeredness to a whole new level.
 - i. As if it had been a trivial thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam...
 - ii. Set up Baal worship on a national level in Samaria.
 - b. Did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all those who were before him.
 - i. Bent to political pressure and persuasion.
 - ii. People pleaser. Swayed according to the thoughts of others in order to win the approval of those who followed him.

II. The Lord God Lives and Reigns

¹ *And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, (1 Kings 17:1a)*

- A. Elijah jumps into the narrative abruptly, with a very mysterious introduction.
 - 1. A Tishbite (from Tishbeh), in Gilead.
- B. Elijah's very existence was proof that the Lord God is the Only God.
 - 1. Name meant "*Yahweh is my God*"!
 - 2. The nation served the God of the surrounding culture.
 - a. But Elijah served the God of Heaven and Earth
 - 3. The Lord God Lives (**v. 1a**)
 - a. I stand before Him.
 - i. Others run from Him.
- C. There won't be rain (or even dew), except at my word (**v. 1b**)

¹ *And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word. (1 Kings 17:1b)*

- 1. Financial and Provisional Death Sentence.
 - a. Israel's Agricultural society was completely dependent upon a distinct outpouring of rain in October-November and again in March-April.
 - 2. This rain was a constant reminder that the nation was completely depended upon God for their mere survival.
 - 3. The "Nobody Prophet" declared that there'd be no rain and...
- D. Elijah Proclaimed "No Rain". And Elijah Prayed "No Rain"
 - 1. Elijah wasn't a whole lot different than many of us.
 - 2. Committed to Effective Fervent Prayer:
 - a. **James 5:17-18:** ¹⁷ *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.*
 - 3. Elijah's Prayer was not an original work. He simply prayed what God had already proclaimed (through Moses).

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- a. **Deut. 11:16-17:** ¹⁶ *Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, ¹⁷ lest the LORD 's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.*
 - b. Elijah stood on God's word.
 - i. God is the one who calls those things that be not as though they were, and...
 - c. In prayer... Elijah just agreed with God.
 - d. If you want to see heaven close and open in this generation, agree with God.
- E. The proclamation of no rain was a frontal attack that exposed the lie of the false god: Baal.
- 1. Baal was supposed to be the god of the sky and weather.
 - a. Baal was supposed to be the god who makes it rain.

III. The Lord God Provides When He Guides

2 *Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, **3** "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. **4** And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." **5** So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. **6** The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. (1 Kings 17:2-6)*

- A. Elijah was a strange dude, but the trajectory of his life was very normal.
- 1. **Phill. 4:12: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.**
 - 2. Knew something about the ups.
 - 3. Knew something about the downs.

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4. Didn't have time to brag about his own success in prayer .

B. God lead Elijah immediately into isolation and uncomfortableness.

1. Awesome!
 - a. Elijah didn't end up in the wilderness by accident.
 - b. He was instructed and lead by God.
2. Something in the valley that was of value for Elijah.
 - a. In the wilderness, God provided for Elijah's sustenance supernaturally.
 - i. Cool water to quench his thirst.
 - ii. Bread and meat (in the morning and the evening).
 - b. God sent a raven by to feed Elijah.
 - i. Ravens were unclean birds.
 - ii. Unthinkable for a Jew to even touch a raven.
 - iii. God broke tradition and custom to feed the one who trusted in Him.

*Took the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

3. Elijah stayed right there in the uncomfortable place (the wilderness), being fed under the unconventional and unthinkable assistance of a filthy, despised animal.
 - a. Circumstances did not look good on the outside, but God was at work on the inside.

C. God doesn't change, but circumstances do.

7 *And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land (1 Kings 17:7).*

1. God allowed the drought to visit the place of supernatural provision.
2. God understands that it often takes pressure to move us into a place of ministry.

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- a. Took persecution in the early church to get them out of Jerusalem and into the mission field to proclaim the gospel.
 - 3. This was a time of national pressure and pain. God loved people too much to waste their pain.

IV. Overflow Often Springs Out of Obedience

8 *Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying,* **9** *"Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."* **(1 Kings 17:8-9)**

- A. God Instructed Elijah to do the unthinkable: Go to Zaraphath in Sidon
 - 1. The Brook Cherith was bad enough
 - a. Fed by ravens
 - 2. Now go to the Gentiles?
 - a. Sidon was usually dependent on Israel in some way for sustenance.
 - b. So if it was rough in Israel, Sidon was probably worse
 - 3. And to a Gentile widow at that?
- B. Provision was not in the place, but in the God who led Elijah.
 - 1. Maybe Elijah knew this to be true.

10 *So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink."* **11** *And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."* **(1 Kings 17:10-11)**

- C. Elijah needed the widow and her son. And the widow and her son needed Elijah.
 - 1. When faced with the prospect of ministering to others, sometimes we are arrogant enough to believe that they need us.
 - a. As we're ministering to them, they inevitably minister to us.

V. Conclusion

A. The Appraisal: What Do You Have to Offer?

12 *So she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." (1 Kings 17:12)*

1. Life just seemed to happen to the widow.
 - b. Death of her husband
 - c. Probably raised her son by herself.
 - d. No welfare, food stamps or WIC programs
2. Assessed her current situation and found that she had nothing to offer.
 - a. Nothing except this little bit of something that's embarrassing to even talk about.
 - b. Certainly too little to share it with a stranger.
 - c. Certainly too little to share it with someone that I'm not in covenant.
3. I'm gonna go lock me and my son in the room and give up.
 - a. We're just gonna consume what we have for ourselves and die.

B. The Widow's view of her "Nothingness" was probably in some way based on what she lost.

13 *And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. **14** For thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.'"* (1 Kings 17:13-14)

1. If we you rushed through the text we might miss this one fact:
 - a. The widow **felt** like she had nothing to offer.
 - i. She **felt** like she had lost all that she had.
 - b. But out of her own mouth she actually had a little something left.
2. When Elijah asked for a piece of bread, "He wasn't asking her for what she lost"?

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- a. The request directed her attention to “What she had left?”
 - b. The talent you got left, the brain cells, the years...
- C. Are you willing to give what you have left to bless others.
- 1. In the middle of adversity and pain, God caused the miracle of multiplication to hit this house in Sidon.
 - 2. Something miraculous happens when we freely give of ourselves to invest in others (in the face of adversity).
 - 3. The miracle of obedience and selflessness preceded the miracle of “Overflow”

15 *So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. 16 The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah. (1 Kings 17:15-16)*