

A Failing Brook

I. Announce:

A. Slide1 Pray At The Pole: Nat Day of Prayer. 12-12:30pm this Thurs.

II. Slide2 Intro: A Failing Brook

A. Tonight we get to meet the infamous king Ahab, his Queen Jezebel, & her storm god Baal. A builder named Hiel & the famous prophet Elijah. [9 cent. BC]

B. These next 6 verses set the *backdrop* for the story of **Elijah**.

III. Slide3 AHAB & JEZEBEL (16:29-33)

A. (31) What an honor to have “el” at the end of your name [*El* name for God].

1. *Daniel, Samuel, Joel, Ezekiel, etc.*

2. So we meet Jezebel’s dad *Ethbaal* [named after His god *Baal*] (*eth*/man of).

B. *Ahab was very spiritual* - he *served & worshiped and even built a temple & an altar & a wooden image* to his god Baal. *Such dedication.*

IV. Slide4 HIEL & JERICHO (16:34)

A. Here we have *not* a king, *not* a prophet, just your average *Joe the Plumber*, construction guy.

1. Whatever job we have...it matters to God...how we use it...*for His glory or against Him. It matters!*

B. *Laying the foundation* and *setting up the gates* mark the *beginning and end* of the construction process.

C. It is uncertain whether *Hiel* intentionally slaughtered his offspring *or* if their death was by natural or accidental causes.

D. *Either way* it was seen as divine punishment in accordance w/*Joshua’s curse*.

1. After the fall of *Jericho*, *Joshua* set a *curse* against any who would rebuild the city.

2. Slide5 Joshua 6:26 *At that time Joshua invoked this curse: May the curse of the Lord fall on anyone who tries to rebuild the town of Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn son,*

he will lay its foundation. At the cost of his youngest son, he will set up its gates.

E. In these **next 2 chapters** we see Elijah obeying 2 commandments from the Lord: *Go hide yourself, and Go show yourself.* [1st his **private** ministry & then his **public** ministry]

V. Slide6 **ELIJAH & CHERITH (17:1-7)**

A. Elijah all of a sudden explodes on the scene as God's prophet.

1. Apparently the drought had begun **6 months** before Elijah suddenly appeared in Ahab's court to proclaim that the drought would last another **3 years**.

B. Slide7 **Elijah** - *my God is Yahweh* [*eli* = my God, *yah* = Yah], which is fitting since most of his efforts are aimed at proving that *the Lord, Yahweh*, is superior to the local storm deity, Baal.

1. Elijah's miracles and interactions are *all geared toward* presenting a proper vision of **who God is**. *Imagine if we made this our life goal?*

2. He *rebukes the godless* & tries to *awaken & restore* his nation.

a) Hmm, how do I get the king & everyone's attention...*oh, maybe no water!*

C. Herbert Lockyer in *All the Men of the Bible*, said *Elijah the tishbite is the grandest and most romantic character Israel ever produced.*

1. Elijah *prayed for* this drought which was *a declaration of war* against **Ahab, Jezebel, and the storm god Baal.**

a) Slide8 **God withheld the rain** - the very stuff of life which only Baal was thought to control.

2. Slide9 James 5:16b-18 *The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; & it did not rain on the land for 3 years & 6 months. 18 & he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.*

a) If the king and the people had *humble themselves* before the Lord, he would've sent rain to the land. **But** most of the nation trusted Baal, **not** Jehovah.

b) Slide10 *The man who stands before God is not afraid to stand before Ahab.*

D. **God withheld the rain** - the very stuff of life which only *Baal* was thought to control.

- E. The drought has 3 more years to go **but** God took care of his faithful servant.
- F. **Note also**, God withdrew Elijah's ministry from Israel as *another punishment* for their sins.
1. **Slide11a** During this time God **led him, fed him, enabled him** to help others (next week, a gentile widow, who even got Jesus' attention in Lk.4)
 2. **Slide11b** Ps.37:3 **Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.**
 3. When we walk by **faith**, God supplies our **needs** and **open doors** of opportunity for us. **Yet, trust the provider not the provision.**
 - a) **Slide12** Brooks dry up, **but** God never fails.
 - b) **Do you trust in the gift or the Giver?** [trust the Lord and not the brook]
- G. The **gift** may last for a season, **but** the **Giver** is the eternal love.
- H. **Slide13** (3) **Brook Cherith/Kerith/Wadi Jabesh** - A Wadi is a valley, ravine, or channel that is dry except in the rainy season.
1. This flowed into the Jordan river, about half way in between Galilee & Dead Sea, from the TransJordan.
- I. **Slide14** (6) The fan-tailed **raven** (*Corvus rhipidurus*) - a bird of the crow family native to Eastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. [**bible details amazing**]
1. **The raven is the 1st bird named in the Bible** (Gen. 8:7); it was an **unclean** bird, **yet** God used it to help His servant. [meat - **road kill?**]
- J. **Slide15** **Man of Iron**
1. **He was...a man whose life was filled with both mystery & majesty.** A fearless, bold & dauntless reformer. A rebuker of kings. A mighty intercessor, praying with faith and intensity. He was a prophet. A performer of miracles. A God inspired prophet ready to obey and trust God. A saint whose end was **glorious**.
 2. **And yet a real man who struggled with discouragement and even depression.** And was capable of **fallible judgments**.

- K. Slide16 (1) Before whom I stand - He was ever standing *in His presence/before His face*.
1. Like the Levite priests in Deut.10:8 *At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day.*
 2. Like the angel Gabriel in Lk.1:19 *I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God.*
 - a) Oh to be able to live, standing in the presence of the living God.
- L. At Cherith **faith** moves on, **trusting** that when the 1st step is taken the next will be revealed.
- M. Slide17 (3) How often does God tell His servants to hide themselves?
1. *There are lessons learned in seclusion which elude us in the crowd.* Meyer
 2. And while we are hiding...God will supply all are needs by most unexpected means.
 - a) God said to Job, *Who provides food for the raven, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?* (38:41)
 - b) Or in Ps.147:9 *He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry.*
 3. But its still hard sitting by a brook thats slowly drying up.
- N. Slide18 What do you do when the brooks of your cherished desires also dry up?
1. Even though you've done **all** to be in the center of God's will. See vs.5
 2. *Elijah showed unquestionable obedience...yet his daily provisions were a meager bread & meat & a trickle of water.*
 3. *And even in that God tested him further for suddenly the brook dried up.* Right when you think it can't get worse.
 4. Although disappointing, we have *no word of complaint* coming from the lips of His prophet.
 5. And God speedily rewards him for his faithful trust & gives him new direction!
 6. *Now*, it would be very easy to say, *"Wait a minute. I felt I was in the center of God's will. He told me to come here. And now this?"*

a) Be careful...human reason *usually can't see* even 1 step ahead.

b) Look for...new directions, new supplies, & much blessing.

(1) Of course next week, we'll see everything becomes clear for Elijah when he gets to *Zarephath*.

c) God's hard instructions are never His last words to us.

(1) The tears of life belong to it's *interlude*, not its *finale*.

O. *Slide19* Which of your brooks are drying up? financial, relational, health, friends walking away.

1. Cheer up! Do not despair, turn to the word of God for fresh help and guidance.

2. ***Faith must be tested; therefore, the ships God builds are sent to sea.***

P. One would be attempted to pace *back-and-forth* day-after-day watching the brook dry up.

1. **But** Elijah refused to allow *circumstances* to come between himself and God.

2. **Unbelief** looks at God *through* the circumstances, just as we often see the sun dimmed by clouds or smoke. **But faith** puts God *between* itself and its circumstances, and looks at them *through* Him.

Q. Most of us would've made other plans long before the stream dried up, long before God spoke. **See** vs.9.

1. We would've *devised some plan* and *asked God to bless it* and *headed elsewhere*.

2. Ps.27:14 ***Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!***

R. *Slide20* After a while...the brook dried up - this is the history of our *yesterdays*, & a prophecy of our *tomorrows*. [God working through loss. Failure. The fading of things]

S. What if God would have sent him straight to Zarephath? He you would have missed *living by faith* at Cherith. [*our hope & help is in God*] [*set your hope in God* Ps.78:7^{Asaph}]