

MAY 5, 2024

3.1

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God rewards our sacrifice.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will obey God's call to sacrifice.



SERIES 3: ELIJAH AND ELISHA

THE FIRST LAST MEAL



FOCUS VERSE: I Kings 17:14

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.

LESSON TEXT: I Kings 17:1-16



Lesson Title: The First Last Meal

Icebreaker: What is the hardest step of faith you have ever taken?

I. THE DROUGHT

» *Why do you think God sometimes has to resort to extreme measures?*

A. The Widow's Desperate Situation

B. The Prophet's Unusual Request

» *How should we respond when God's command doesn't seem to make sense?*

C. I Will Trust in God Even When I Don't See His Plan

» *What do you need the Lord to provide for you right now?*

II. GOD'S PROVISION AT ZAREPHATH

» *Why do you think God sometimes reaches outside the walls of the church to provide miracles?*

A. The Widow's Faith-Filled Response

B. God's Miraculous Provision

C. I Will Obey God's Call to Sacrifice

» *What do you need to step out by faith and do right now?*

Prayer Focus

- To trust God for miracles He wants to work
- To obey God even when we don't understand

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: I Kings 17:1-16

Elijah's introduction in Scripture was as enigmatic as the rest of his life. He is described as being from Tishbe, which is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture except in conjunction with Elijah's name. We know Tishbe was located somewhere in Gilead, a region east of the Jordan River, allotted to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (Numbers 32; Deuteronomy 3:13).

Without any other backstory, Elijah simply appeared in Scripture and began to prophesy. Ahab, the king of Israel, had allied himself with Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and married his daughter Jezebel. The Old Testament is clear that Baal worship was rampant throughout Israel. Immediately the stage was set for a divine confrontation; Ahab aligned with Ethbaal—whose name means “with Baal,” versus Elijah—whose name means “God is Jehovah.”

Elijah's first two miracles further demonstrated his mysterious character. First, he called on God to stop rain and dew, thus causing a drought, after which he immediately went to a brook where God sustained him through ravens who fed him. Later he traveled to Phoenicia where a Gentile Zidonian widow fed him, and in return, God provided her meals miraculously. She even witnessed her son being raised from the dead. These miracles set the stage for what would prove to be an eventful and unique ministry in the life of “God is Jehovah.”

However, these first two miracles also provided a thematic introduction for Elijah's ministry. A drought came upon Israel because of their unfaithfulness to Jehovah and their unbridled worship of idols. However, God richly blessed a Gentile because of her faithfulness to Jehovah. Elijah's first two miracles demonstrated that rejection of Jehovah leads to death, but acceptance of Jehovah leads to life. Even God's chosen people, the Israelites, are not exempt from judgment, but neither are Gentiles exempt from God's grace. Elijah demonstrated throughout his ministry the importance, necessity, and priority of truly making sure that “Jehovah is my God.”

THE OLD TESTAMENT IS CLEAR THAT BAAL WORSHIP WAS RAMPANT THROUGHOUT ISRAEL. IMMEDIATELY THE STAGE WAS SET FOR A DIVINE CONFRONTATION; AHAB ALIGNED WITH ETHBAAL—WHOSE NAME MEANS “WITH BAAL,” VERSUS ELIJAH—WHOSE NAME MEANS “GOD IS JEHOVAH.”

DAY 1

I Kings 17:1-3

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 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.

Biblical Insight

Elijah's statement "As the LORD God of Israel liveth" is unique since most prophecies began with the introductory "Thus saith the LORD." Elijah was stating the certainty of Jehovah's existence as opposed to the falsehood of Baal's. Ahab could be as confident in the drought's arrival as Elijah was of God's omnipotence. Furthermore, a drought would prove Baal's powerlessness because Baal worshipers believed Baal would provide rain and a bountiful crop (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on I Kings 17:1b and 1c).

Daily Devotion

Johnson Chowdary devoted himself to the worship of the South Indian god *Ayyappa*. Johnson fasted for forty days, bathed in freezing cold water, ate only one meal a day, and slept on the floor without a blanket to worship a pagan god. These rituals brought no peace, joy, or purpose.

On December 14, 2000, Chowdary was robbed and left for dead in the street. While dying, Chowdary began praying to Hindu gods. After realizing they were not answering his prayers, he remembered the words of a pastor he met five years earlier. He began praying to Jesus.

Immediately after praying, Jesus spoke to him, "Rise up! You cannot die!" Chowdary survived and shares the gospel to this day. What the enemy meant to destroy us, God uses to demonstrate His power and presence. In what ways has God revealed His power to you during the hardest seasons of your life?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

I Kings 17:4-7

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.

Biblical Insight

God's provision for Elijah had multiple layers of significance. First, any bird feeding a human would be miraculous, but God sent a raven, famous for their scavenging and selfish nature. Furthermore, although Elijah was the prophet of God, he was still affected by the drought. Without a miracle, he would not have survived. Eventually the brook dried up, but that was not the end of God's provision; it was preparation for God's next miracle He would work in Zarephath.

Daily Devotion

According to Jewish law, ravens were considered unclean because they were scavengers. They would feast on roadkill and enjoy a buffet of dead animals. For many of us, the thought of being fed by dirty, scavenging birds is upsetting. Imagine being Elijah and hearing God was using ravens to Door Dash your dinner. As a faithful Jew, he stayed away from unclean animals all his life, but Elijah trusted God, and God provided for Elijah.

Throughout Scripture, we see God providing in unique ways from water out of rocks to manna to using a young boy's lunch. If you are praying for provision, remember that God will meet your needs, but perhaps not by the delivery system you think. Reflect upon unique ways God has provided for you in the past. Take time to thank God for each provision.



Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

I Kings 17:8-9

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.

Biblical Insight

Zarephath was not located in Israel; it was a small town in Zidon, the capital city of Phoenicia. Jezebel was Zidonian (I Kings 16:31), and when she married Ahab, Baal worship increased in Israel. Ironically, the miracle God worked for the Gentile widow, her family, and for Elijah occurred outside of Israel, in an area devoted to Baal worship. Jesus would refer to this story later when He spoke of no prophet having honor in his own country, for Elijah was sent to Zarephath despite the many widows living in Israel during this era (Luke 4:24-27) (*Apostolic Study Bible*, commentary on I Kings 17:8-16).

Daily Devotion

Social psychologists John Darley and Daniel Batson asked sixty-seven seminary students to deliver a sermon on the Good Samaritan. Each student was assigned one of two conditions: hurried or unhurried. As each student walked alone to deliver the sermon, they encountered a man slumped in a doorway in distress. The researchers observed that only 10 percent of seminary students in the hurried condition stopped to help the man while 63 percent of the students in the unhurried condition stopped. Darley and Batson concluded that when people are pressed for time, they must choose between helping others or meeting their own goals.

In our fast-paced society, it can become easy to mistreat, ignore, and overlook people while trying to reach our goals. One of our primary goals must be caring for others. We should never let it be said of us that non-Christians show more hospitality, love, and grace than we do. Note someone you could reach out to this week to show love and care. Then, go and reach out to them.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

I Kings 17:10-12

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 may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

Biblical Insight

The widow's expression to Elijah "as the LORD thy God liveth" parallels Elijah's statement to Ahab at the beginning of the chapter. Just as Elijah was stating to Ahab the certainty of the impending drought, the widow confessed her certainty that she would starve to death. However, the widow's statement also demonstrated recognition of Jehovah's existence and power. After experiencing the ravages of the drought, she clearly recognized Baal's weakness and Jehovah's supremacy. One might wonder how many in Israel would have made her confession since God had to send Elijah outside of Israel to Zidon in order to find someone who would recognize His lordship.

Daily Devotion

Droughts bring hardship, but in 2007, a drought yielded treasures and trash. Lake Okeechobee in Florida, the second-largest freshwater lake in the United States, dropped to its lowest level during the 2007 drought. With the lake's recession, spearheads, arrowheads, conch shell pendants, and other cultural objects were discovered, dating back to the early settlers of the Florida Everglades. It was a treasure trove for historians and archaeologists.

In addition, trash—such as high levels of arsenic, soda cans, and plastic bottles—was also uncovered. Conservationists removed the trash but left many of the treasures alone. In a similar way, spiritual droughts can reveal what is deep inside of us. If you are in a season in which God seems distant and you have not experienced a spiritual refreshing for a while, examine your heart.

Is this season revealing more trash or treasure? What are you allowing to remain in your heart?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

I Kings 17:13-16

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.

Biblical Insight

The widow's response demonstrated her trust in the prophet of God. Since she had witnessed Jehovah's power to bring about a drought, surely she could trust Jehovah's ability to provide miraculously. Her obedience to Jehovah's command by way of Elijah was also a denial of Baal, since Baal worship was supposed to provide bountiful provision as a storm god. By submitting to the one true God, the widow showed faith in Jehovah, believing that He was able and faithful to provide so much more than Baal ever could.

Daily Devotion

A *Peanuts* cartoon shows Charlie Brown and Linus sitting on a bench. The caption reads, "Worrying won't stop the bad stuff from happening; it just stops you from enjoying the good." Worrying is a destructive habit that impacts our body and our faith. Dr. Charles Mayo, one of the founders of the Mayo Clinic, said, "Worry affects circulation, the heart and the glands . . . I have never known a man who died from overwork, but many who died from doubt."

Each of us will face situations in which our first reaction is to worry or doubt. We may even find ourselves like the widow at Zarephath who was preparing to die. When you are struggling with worry and doubt, take time to praise God for the times He has shown His faithfulness in the past. Remind yourself that God was faithful yesterday. He is faithful today. He will be faithful tomorrow. Surrender your worry to God.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*
