

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to 1 Kings 17

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through 1 Kings

And this evening, we are going to be introduced to the prophet Elijah –

We spent most of our study last week looking at the four kings of the Northern Kingdom – and we kind of saw a familiar trend of darkness begetting darkness.

The scriptures point out that each of those kings did evil in the sight of the Lord and then the subsequent king was described as doing worse than all who were before him.

They were more evil –

They influenced the people of the Northern Kingdom to rebel further away from God.

And so we were introduced to King Ahab at the end of chapter 16 – and he was the most evil King the Northern Kingdom had up to that point.

These were the darkest days in the Northern Kingdom.

So, what we are going to see in our study this evening is a contrast to the darkness we saw last week – and what we are going to see is light rising in the midst of darkness – and we are going to see it through the prophet Elijah.

Let's pray...

In our study last week – we learned that not only did Ahab follow in the sins of Jeroboam – remember Jeroboam had set up this alternate form of worship in the Northern Kingdom

Ahab continued in that and reintroduced the worship of the idols and gods of the Canaanites.

He built a temple for Baal in the capital city. He made a wooden image – dedicated to the Asherah and the people began worshipping these pagan gods.

Enter, Elijah.

Check this out -

His name alone means “Yahweh is God” or “Yahweh is my God”

His name alone is an open rebuke to what king Ahab and the people were doing.

You see church, one of the things we have to understand is that God will only allow men to spiral downward in sin for so long before He enters in.

Sometimes He does it through circumstances and difficulties in order to reveal to us where we are at spiritually.

And sometimes He does it through an individual – like Elijah

[1Ki 17:1-16 NKJV] 1 An 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."

Who is this Elijah?

By what we have here in verse 1 –

He is a nobody from nowhere.

We have no record of his genealogy – remember, that was very important to the Hebrew culture.

We don't even know what he did.

And as we read the scriptures – we get a sense that he was just an average Joe.

[Jas 5:17 NKJV] 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.

He had a nature like ours: He was an ordinary guy

In fact, in our studies over the next few weeks we see him in a bout of deep and dark depression so great he asked God to take his life.

He bemoaned the fact that he was all alone and no one cared about God

He throws himself a pity party and nobody shows up.

Like all of us; he knew moments of weakness and doubt

But here, at the beginning of his story, we see him standing boldly before Ahab to announce the message that God had given him to deliver.

And the message begins with

As the LORD God of Israel lives

What Elijah is saying here is that the God that he represents is the living God.

“Ahab and Jezebel – God is not dead.”

When man choses to openly rebel against God – one of the things that they tend to do is to kill off God.

There is no God.

God is dead.

When people today make statements that God will accept my lifestyle because God is a god of love.

What they are doing is creating a god in their image – one who is not going to threaten their lifestyle and in doing so, worshipping an idol - killing the Living God.

But one day – even these individuals will be accountable to Him.

Now, I had you make a note of the next phrase – **before whom I stand.**

Elijah was standing before Ahab – king of Israel

But Elijah knew that Ahab was simply an earthly king

Elijah was able to pronounce judgment because he knew he stood before the Heavenly King – he stood before God Almighty

“I stand before God and therefore I must be faithful to Him in all that I say and that I do”

And I think there is application for us in this statement.

We need to remember the God who we stand before.

When we have that choice to make – to either take us into compromise or take us into righteousness, remember the God we stand before.

And when we realize that we stand before the One True Living God, the choice becomes clear of what path we are going to walk.

So the message that Elijah faithfully delivers to Ahab –

there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

“Ahab, because of your sin and the sin of the land, there is going to be no rain in the land.”

Think of how bold and convicting this proclamation was –

Elijah was able to stand in the face of evil and proclaim it.

No king liked being told that they were in sin or that their people were in sin.

Again, God is trying to get Ahab's attention

The pagan god that he worshipped and that the nation worshipped – Baal – was the god of rain.

So what Elijah is saying is – your god of rain is not going to be able to stop this because God is greater than your dead god – and you can sacrifice to Baal all you want – there will be no rain.

It will rain when God puts the word in my mouth to make it rain.

So we see Elijah being faithful is delivering the message that he was given – even if it was not a positive message.

In the same way, we must be faithful to what the Lord has put in our hearts.

We have to be true and faithful to His word and not deviate by proclaiming that everything is going to be ok – especially if God doesn't want us to proclaim that message.

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.

So – notice, God is now coming to Elijah – after delivering this message and God is going to want to protect Elijah because He knows that there are bad times coming / there are difficulties that are going to happen because of this dryness that is coming upon the land.

And so – God tells Elijah to hide.

In verse, we see Elija's boldness

And here God tells him to hide.

“Now is not the time to be out in the middle of this crowd”

Again, we only hide when the Lord tells us to hide.

There is a time to speak and a time to not to speak.

We see this even in the ministry of Jesus, He speaks the truth to the religious rulers and then in the next verse, we see Him escaping from the crowds – because He knew what they were going to do.

Same thing in the life of Paul –

There were times when God was hiding them by the protection of His hand.

So we need to have discernment and be listening to the Holy Spirit for the times when we shall speak and the times when we shall hold our tongue.

God will show us.

Just like He showed Elijah

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.

As we read the scriptures, one of the things that we find is that God uses times of loneliness in the lives of those He uses.

Jacob – had a time of loneliness when he was on the run from his brother

Moses had a time of loneliness when he spent those years in the wilderness

Paul the Apostle – after his conversion, he spent times of loneliness in Arabia and Damascus

But church, these times of loneliness may simply be a preordained time of preparation for what God has for us next.

It is a time to rely on God for His provisions.

I had you notice that God uses ravens to bring food to Elijah

Ravens, according to the law were an unclean animal (Lev 11) they are scavengers.

According to Job 38:41 – They are also an animal that is so naturally selfish that they will neglect feeding their own young

But notice – God is using them to provide food for Elijah.

You see church,

We can depend on God to refresh us, to nourish us – no matter what comes our way, **so long as** we stay under His covering while we are in the drought.

And Elijah was able to experience His refreshing and His nourishing because He obeyed.

As long as Elijah stayed there by the Brook Cherith – God provided for him.

The same thing goes for our lives –

If we stay under His covering – where He wants us to be – He will provide for us.

[Phi 4:19 NKJV] 19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

If we come out of His covering – we are on our own. We are trying to protect ourselves.

We are no longer relying on His provisions.

A good example of this is the life of the disciples after Jesus was taken up

What did Jesus tell them before He left –

I want you to go to Jerusalem and wait there for the Helper / the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4)

If they had not gone to Jerusalem and waited for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit would they have experienced it somewhere else?

No – because the provision was there.

They had to obey.

They had to go.

They had to wait for Him.

That was the promise – if they went there and waited, God was going to meet them there.

At the end of verse 7 – I had you make a note that the brook dried up.

Now, imagine Elijah – he was obedient to where God called him to be

And now after some time, the brook is dry

Same things happen in our lives – we feel that we have been faithful to what the Lord has called us to do – and initially we are blessed because of our faithfulness and then the brook dries out.

Church, these are times that the Lord uses to strengthen our faith

Initially our faith took us to the brook – but not that the brook is dried up – more faith is required that the Lord will continue to provide for us as He said He would.

God wants to train us to keep our eyes on Him, the Provider, and not the provisions.

Elijah knew God had directed him to Cherith and even though the water was running out, trusted that when he needed to, God would tell him what to do and where to go.

God does not lure His people into the wilderness to starve them to death.

He takes them there to prove that His power & faithfulness are independent of our circumstances.

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."

I had you make a note where God commands Elijah to go next.

Zarephath which belongs to Sidon.

And the reason is that Sidon is where Jezebel is from (1 Kings 16:31)

It's one thing to believe that God will feed you with ravens in the desert.

It's an altogether different thing to believe He will use a total pagan to feed you.

For Elijah, going to Zarephath was a greater stretch than Cherith.

He was going to the middle of Baal worship

The area had been affected by the drought

And to make matters worse –

She was a widow.

Widows were at the bottom of the social order.

The very last person to be expected to have enough food would be a widow.

And she is not a Jew.

Elijah is going from a place where he was hidden to a place to a place where he is going to be right in the middle of darkness.

You see,

God wants Elijah to realize help can come at any time and place if we're led by Him.

God wanted Elijah to know His power wasn't limited to the borders of Israel – He is

God of all nations!

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."

Elijah walks into town – she finds the woman who God is going to use to provide him provisions –

And he asks her for a drink

She is gathering sticks – this means that this is how she was getting her firewood.

She didn't have the ability to go buy it or servants to go get it – she had to go out and pick up scraps of whatever she could find in order to get what she needed.

So again, God is doing this to stretch Elijah's faith and as we will see, God is going to stretch the faith of this woman.

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."

So here we see his faith stretched – he is asking her for water and bread.

It didn't seem logical – but he is trusting the Lord

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."

So we see her desperate situation –

She is collecting stuff for her last meal with her son.

And here you have a complete stranger asking her to make him a cake with what little she has.

And church –

This is how God often stretches our faith –

He brings us to the brink of the abyss

He wants us to trust Him – and He asks us to give Him what little we have.

What little time we have

What little energy we have

We cry out, “I can’t go any further” – and His response, give me the little you have and trust me to provide for the rest.

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.' " 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.

When we put God first, our needs are met

Sometimes, if we want to see the works of God being done, we have to learn to give up the things we might be clinging to.

We need to be willing to let go of the things we think are absolutely necessary for our existence.

And we see what happens when we do – when we place our trust in His provisions.

The flour is not used up, the oil doesn't run dry.

But when our faith is not exercised, when we don't allow God to stretch our faith –

What little we have will begin to dry up.

I used this verse last week – and I want to finish with it this week.

[Mat 13:12 NKJV] 12 "For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

God has given us much and as we step out in faith and begin to use what He has given us, God will give more.

And the real thing He has given us is faith

Elijah is learning this

This woman is learning this – next week, we will see that God is really going to stretch her faith.

Because something really important to her is going to be taken from her and she is going to have to trust God – by faith

And the result of her faith is that her needs were met miraculously

That is our faithful God

And that is where we will end today

Let's pray...

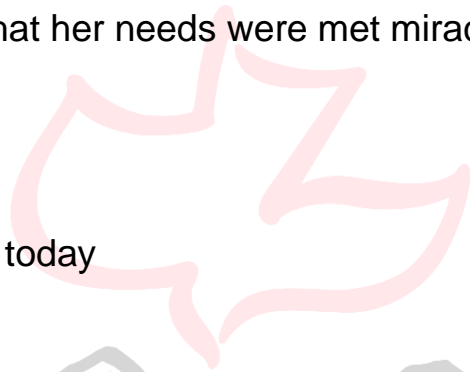
To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.



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Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'



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