

1 **Buzzards, Bread, and Blessings**

1 Kings 17

2 **Review**

- In the previous two lessons we have introduced Ahab and Jezebel – the king and queen of the Northern kingdom of Israel who were the worst in the history of Israel, bar none.
- We also introduced two other characters that up till now have only played a small role: Hiel of Bethel and Elijah the Tishbite.

3 **Ahab**

- Ahab was the wickedest king that Israel had had so far, for three reasons:
  - Ahab was unsatisfied with the sins his predecessors had committed
  - Ahab took Jezebel as wife
  - Ahab introduced Baal worship to Israel in a formalized way and made it the state religion

4 **Hiel**

- Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt the city of Jericho after it had lain in ruins for more than 500 years because of a prophecy that Joshua made concerning the man who would try to rebuild it.
- Because of Hiel's disregard for the Word of God, he lost both his firstborn and his youngest son in the construction of the City of Jericho.

5 **Elijah**

- Elijah was the prophet of Jehovah and will be the central figure in the next two chapters of 1 Kings.
- He is one of the most important prophets in Hebrew culture, and is the leading representative of Jehovah during Ahab's reign.
- By his very name, Elijah is the antithesis of Ahab and Jezebel and everything that they stand for.

6 **Enter: Elijah**

- 1 Kings 17:1 – *"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."*
- Elijah's entry upon the scene is sudden, like a thunderbolt.

7 **God's Judgment: The Drought**

- God judges Israel in the form of a drought – there will be no rain for three and a half years.
- This is symbolic of Israel's own spiritual dryness.
- Also note the nature of the drought: it will only end *according to the word of the Lord*.

8 **Drought**

- 1 • Diminished crop growth or yield productions and carrying capacity for livestock
- Famine due to lack of water for irrigation;
- Snakes migration and increases in snakebites
- Malnutrition, dehydration and related diseases

9 **Israel's spiritual drought**

- No growth spiritually
- There was a famine of God's Word – the prophets of God were being hunted down by Jezebel
- The nation of Israel was malnourished for the truth, starving for the Word of God. This was clearly represented in the "diseases" – the social evils running rampant.
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10 **Drought**

- Ba'al-Hadad and Ashtoreth (the two most important Phoenician gods) are supposed to be gods of fertility, rain, and the sky.
- God afflicts the land with a drought, thus hitting at the very heart of the pagan religion.
- This demonstrates God's complete control over the very realms of his supposed rivals, demonstrating His power in an incredibly relatable way.

11 **Elijah goes into hiding**

- 1 Kings 17:2-3 – “*And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.*”
- Right after God has commanded Elijah to proclaim His judgment, he instructs him to go into hiding in the wilderness.

12  **Providential provision**

- Verses 4-6 – “*And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 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. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.*”

13  **God's provision is not our provision**

- God chooses to provide for Elijah in an unorthodox manner.
- Despite the fact that Elijah is the only prophet of God with the boldness to speak out against the wickedness of the nation, God does not provide for him in the comfortable palace of some rival king (like He did for David).

14  **God's provision is not our provision**

- Instead, God's provision sends Elijah into hiding in the wilderness.
- There, he is not fed by angels (as was Jesus) – rather, he is fed by ravens.
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15  **Buzzards**

- <sup>2</sup> • Ravens are unclean animals.
- They are carrion birds, and though highly intelligent are not especially attractive.
- They feed on dead things, refuse, and trash.
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16  **Buzzards**

- So why would God choose to feed his beloved, faithful prophet, using unclean carrion fowl?
  - To remind us that God's blessings, as well as His judgments (the drought) do not come at our whim. God cannot be turned on or off like a faucet.
  - To remind Elijah (and us) that *he himself* was nothing special. God did not owe anything to Elijah.

17  **Ravens bring humble pie**

- On the outset this may seem harsh: surely God's prophet – the most revered of the Old Testament prophets – deserves greater respect than this?
- But if Elijah is to be of any use to God, he must be *humble*.
- Through it all, God provides for Elijah's needs.

18  **The brook dries up**

- Verse 7 – “*And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.*”
- After a long time already of no rain, the brook dries up. No rain, no water. No water, no brook.
  - Notice that while the brook has dried up, God's provision has never failed or waned.

19  **Off to Zarephath**

- Verses 8-9 – “*And 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.*”
- God sends Elijah up to Zarephath, a part of the Phoenician Empire – the very empire of which Jezebel was princess.
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20  **God's protection is not our protection**

- God protects His own children in accordance with His own will.
- Keep in mind that Jezebel was still a princess of Sidon – she was very powerful in her native country.

- This in mind, it seems counter-intuitive to send Elijah to a land where he is sure to be hated and hunted down.

**21  God's protection is not our protection**

- But God has a purpose in all of this – to demonstrate His power to His servant.
- You are never any safer than when you are within the will of God – when you are subject to His authority.

**22  Bread**

- Verse 10-11 - "*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. 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.*"
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**23  Bread**

- Verses 12-13 – "*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. 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.*"

**24  Bread**

- Verses 14-16 - "*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.*
- *And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.*
- *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.*"
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**25  Bread**

- 1 • This Phoenician woman's act of faith – this acknowledgement that Jehovah lived and had the power to provide – outshined the unbelief of all of the nation of Israel.
- It was so significant, it caused Jesus to comment on it.

**26  Jesus explains**

- Luke 4:25 – "*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;*
- *But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.*
- *And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.*"
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**27  Jesus explains**

- Christ presents us with a unique opportunity – the Author of the Book tells us the significance of the Story.
- What Chris does NOT mention:
  - The miracle of the oil and meal always replenishing. A mistake is made if we focus *only* on this.

**28  Entitlement vs. gratitude**

- Christ sites two different examples here, one from the ministry of Elijah, and another from the ministry of Elisha (his successor):
  - This widow, who alone God provided for, though there were many of God's "chosen people" whom He could have just as easily worked the miracle for.
  - Naaman, the Syrian general who Elisha healed of leprosy – though God could just as easily have healed Israelite lepers.

29  **Entitlement vs. gratitude**

- Christ's point is this: do not think that because you have been "chosen", you are special.
- God is no respecter of persons. He does not play favorites based on:
  - Ethnicity
  - Denomination
  - Homeschooling
  - Godly upbringing or Christian background
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30  **Entitlement vs. gratitude**

- All of these things *oblige* you to serve God the more – they do not *entitle* you to receive the blessings of God.
- This is revealed on a personal and a national level:
  - Personal, in Elijah's being fed by Ravens
  - National, in God's blessings falling upon a woman from a pagan country

31  **Blessings**

- The great thing about blessings, though, is that we *do* serve a loving God.
- Sometimes His blessings will take forms (like droughts and ravens) that we do not appreciate.
- Like Elijah, we need to trust in Him to make good on His promises.
- The ultimate goal is to see His Word flourish and prosper among the heathen.

32  **Ahab and Hiel**

- Ahab and Hiel (and the majority of the nation of Israel, by extension) presumed that God was ineffectual and would not punish sin.
- They were motivated by a sense of entitlement instead of a sense of gratitude.
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33  **Summary**

- Don't –
  - Make the mistake of Ahab and Hiel and presume upon God, because you think you can get away with it
  - Assume that God is obliged to bless you because of who you are
- Do –
  - Follow the direction of God as His obedient servant