

Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

CHAPTER 17.

¹ Elijah, having prophesied against Ahab, is sent to Cherith, where the ravens feed him. ⁸ H: is sent to the widow of Zarephath. ¹⁷ He raiseth the widow's son. ²⁴ The woman believeth him.

AND ³Elijah the Tishbite, ⁴who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, ⁵As the LORD God of Israel liveth, ⁶before whom I stand, ⁷there shall not be dew nor rain ⁸these 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.

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 ⁸after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

⁸ ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

⁹ Arise, get thee to ¹⁰Zarephath, which *belongeth* to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

v1 Elijah presents before Ahab

Elijah always identifies with **God's Word**. He was a man totally **bound up** in the message he brought. **Gilead** was a wild, tough place, a place of refuge. Gileadites were tough people: **1 Chron 12:8; Josh 17:1**. Gilead was a place where you had time to develop a **relationship** with God.

No rain - See notes below right.

v2-7 Elijah at the Brook Cherith

v5 Elijah accepted God unquestionably **v6** Elijah went to Cherith to **prepare him** for converting the widow. Why choose a raven? Because it is unclean and has trouble feeding its young: **Lev 11:3-4; Job 38:41**. The widow was represented by the ravens. She was a Gentile who struggled to feed her young. Peter also had to learn that what God has cleansed, they were not to call unclean: **Acts 10:12-15**.

v7 Brook drying up an incredible trial for Elijah. Imagine being in these circumstances! **"after a while"** - some suggest this means a full year.

v8-16 The Widow of Zarephath

Again Elijah is moved by God's Word.

Zarephath - Heb. "refinement, a place of smelting". This was to be a fiery trial to test Elijah and the widow, **1 Pet 1:7**.

Zidon: Heb. "catching fish". Elijah would become a fisher of men by converting the widow. Think of the reasons not to go: **1** It was a long journey, about 140km in a time of drought, **2** it was Jezebel's home town, **3** the woman may have been an idolator, **4** how would a widow sustain Elijah anyway?, **5** and how would Elijah find her? Nevertheless Elijah is a man of great faith. But his mind had been so conditioned that he goes unquestionably.

Luke 4:24-26: Key Quote! Jesus uses the widow of Zarephath as an example of great faith. See also Jesus' conversation with the Syrophenician woman in **Mark 7**.

v12 Handful of meal: The *minchar* offering, given to Yahweh to acknowledge that God gives all blessings: **Lev 2:2; 5:12; 6:15; 9:17**.

Would we give Elijah food if we were in that situation?

v17-24 Death and Resurrection of the Widow's Son

v18 All she had left was her son and now he is gone. The widow acknowledges her sin. Similar to the resurrection of the Shunammite woman's son in **2 Kgs 4:1-37**.

Elijah's prayer to withhold the rain: See **James 5:16-17**. Elijah's fervent prayer was answered by God. He prayed that it would not rain for 3½ years. The reason being that there was apostasy in Israel: **Deut 11:16-17**. The lack of rain represented a spiritual drought and should have taught Israel to seek Yahweh. Rain is a symbol of God's Word: **Deut 32:2-3; Psalms 72:6**. Jesus Christ was a **root growing out of dry ground** in similar circumstances: **Isa 11:1-5; 53:1-2**. The **3½ years** is typical of **our Lord's ministry**, a time of **trial and suffering**.

Colour code: Blue (God and Jesus Christ); Red (sin/devil/judgment of wicked); Green (Kingdom); Orange (important words and phrases); Purple (return of Jews to the land); Yellow (practical exhortation). Prepared for Study Week 2008. For a PDF file, go to www.studyweek.net or email acdangerfield@webshield.net.au. Much assistance for this summary has been gained from notes and talks by Bro John Martin.

me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a ¹⁰loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

²⁰ And ²¹he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?

²¹ And he ²²stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come ²³into him again.

²² And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he ²³revised.

²³ And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the ²⁴chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

²⁴ ¶ And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this ²⁵I know that thou *art* a ²⁶man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth *is* truth.

v20-21 Elijah is a man of prayer who trusts God. Elijah identifies himself with the boy by lying upon him. **Jesus does this** by touching people and entering in to their feelings when he healed them.

v24 This woman is converted to the Truth. The greatest work of Elijah's first advent. Converting people takes **time**. It requires us to have a **relationship** with people. The **least spectacular work** of Elijah's life was the most effective. There is a **real lesson** in this for us! God is with us no matter how "insignificant" our work in the truth may **appear**.

Application in life of Jesus: Jesus continually alludes to the life of Elijah in **Luke 12** when he is asked by a man to sort out a monetary dispute with his brother. He refers to Elijah's life in **Luke 12:22,24,35,42,49,54**.

What is the message for us? "A man's life does not consist of things which he possesses!"

Believers in the Dark Ages: **Rev 11:1-7:** God's witnesses in the middle ages prophesy for symbolic 3½ years - **Rev 11** uses the language of Elijah: "power to shut heaven that it rain not". Believers suffered terrible trials when the Roman Catholic Church (Jezebel) controlled Europe and persecuted the saints. **Christ's ministry was 3½ years**.

So the symbolic 1260 day period speaks of believers who are **"in Christ"** following in Christ's footsteps: **1 Pet 2:21**. Whenever we read of this time period in **Daniel** or **Revelation**, it speaks of a time of **suffering** and **trial**. Elijah's life was one of trial and struggle in the face of terrible apostasy and evil in Israel. So it has been for believers through all ages.

If we suffer with our Lord, we shall reign with him: **2 Tim 2:12; Col 3:4**. If we witness for Christ now, we will witness for him in the Kingdom age.

During a time of **false religion** and **deceit**, it is vital that Elijah learns to be a **FATHER** for Israel, to protect, care, nurture: **Deut 11:16-20; Isa 40:11**. Elijah learnt that lesson. His was **educated** through personal experience **to be like Yahweh**. To **care for** and **feed God's ecclesia** in difficult times and to build **relationships** with others so they are encouraged.