

## **“God’s Provisions before the Rain”**

1 Kings 17:8-16

Introduction: Wicked King Ahab had permitted his wife Jezebel to bring the worship of Baal into Israel. Baal was the Phoenician fertility god who sent rain and bountiful crops. Her plan was to exterminate the worshipers of Jehovah and have all the people of Israel serving Baal (18:4). Elijah the Tishbite suddenly appears on the scene and then leaves as quickly as he came. Elijah was not a polished preacher like Isaiah and Jeremiah, but was more of a rough-hewn reformer who challenged the people to abandon their idols and return to the Lord. He was not only a worker of miracles, but he also experienced miracles in his own life. Chapter 17 and 18 of 1 Kings record seven different miracles that Elijah either performed or experienced.

Body: The Jewish people depended on the seasonal rains for the success of their crops. If the Lord did not send the early rain in October and November and the latter rain in March and April, there would soon be a famine in the land. The blessings of the semiannual rains depended on the people obeying the covenant of the Lord (Deut. 11). God warned the people that their disobedience would turn the heavens into brass and the earth into iron. For the next three years, the word of Elijah would control the weather in Israel! An extended drought, announced and controlled by a prophet of Jehovah, would make it clear to everybody that Baal the storm god was not a true god at all.

- I. The Problem 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.”*
  - A. 1 Kings 17:2-4
  - B. 1 Kings 17:7- *“And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.”*
  - C. Was this a problem or an answer to prayer? 1 Kings 17:1
  
- II. The Place 1 Kings 17:8-9- *“And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there...”*
  - A. Elijah lived at Cherith probably a year, and then God told him to leave. God’s instructions may have shocked the prophet, for the Lord commanded him to travel northeast about a hundred miles to the Phoenician city of Zarephath.
  - B. It was 150 miles of parched land and starving people.
  - C. Zarephath was an outpost of Zidon. Why would God send Elijah to Zidon?
  - D. Jezebel’s father, Ethbaal, was the king of the Zidonians.
  - E. 1 Kings 16:31- *“...he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.”*
  - F. Elijah would be entering into enemy territory.
  
- III. The Plan 1 Kings 17:9- *“...behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.”*
  - A. Was not widows some of the neediest people of the land? We do not live on man’s explanations, but on God’s promises.

- B. Which widow would be the right widow?
- C. 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;”*
- D. Can you imagine what went through the mind of Elijah? He was a man that was subject to like passions as we are. He may have wondered if the widow was young or old, ugly or beautiful, rich or poor.
- E. The widow Elijah met at the gate of the city was evidently poor, and she had a child tied to her apron strings. Probably the prophet was far from impressed.
- F. The barrel of provision belonged to a widow. Further, she was not even a Hebrew widow, but a Gentile in desperate need herself.
- G. All that stood between her and starvation was an almost empty barrel.

- IV. The Provision—Because of our proneness to look at the bucket and forget the fountain, God has frequently to change His means of supply to keep our eyes fixed on the source.
- A. After the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land, the manna ceased to fall into the camp and God changed His way of feeding the people. During the early days of the church in Jerusalem, the believers had all that they needed, but a few years later, the saints in Jerusalem had to receive help from the Gentile believers in Antioch. Elijah was about to learn what God could do with empty vessels!
  - B. The Commandments—A Little Water in a Vessel 1 Kings 17:10- *“...Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.”*
    - 1. Water was scarce then; every drop was very precious; it was therefore a large request that Elijah made to her.
    - 2. 1 Samuel 3:1- *“And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.”*
  - C. The Christ—Meal in a Barrel 1 Kings 17:12- *“...I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel...”*
    - 1. A handful of meal! That was all. Of course, it all depends on whose hand is full.
    - 2. In this case, the hand that was full was God’s. This hand could never fail.
    - 3. This meal spoke of Christ.
    - 4. The second offering in the Mosaic Law was the meal offering. It pictured the sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was crushed beneath the millstones and fit to be offered to God.
  - D. The Comforter—A Little Oil in a Cruse 1 Kings 17:12- *“...and a little oil in a cruse...”*
    - 1. The oil speaks of the Holy Spirit.
    - 2. That oil would blend with the meal and make the dough for a small cake. As the flour and the oil were blended together, so the Son and the Spirit were blended together.
    - 3. The Holy Spirit is part of everything Jesus said, and did, and was.
    - 4. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit, anointed by the Holy Spirit, and offered in sacrifice to God through the Holy Spirit.
  - E. The Cross—Two Sticks 1 Kings 17:12- *“...and, behold, I am gathering two sticks...”*
    - 1. The two sticks represent the cross.
    - 2. It takes two sticks to make a cross, no more, no less.

3. The woman had a firm grasp on what she needed—Christ (the meal), the Comforter (oil), and the Cross (two sticks). They saw her through to the end.
- V. The Promise 1 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.”*
- A. Every mealtime that widow would dip her hand into the barrel from which she had scraped the very last remnant of meal the last time and, amazingly, there was just enough for another meal.
  - B. Every meal was a crisis. God was teaching Elijah to trust Him in the crisis.
  - C. God does not ask much of us when we first come to Him with our deep needs.
  - D. All that He asks of us is to hold on to Christ, the Comforter, and the Cross. That is sufficient enough to see us through.

Conclusion: This certainly was an amazing narrative, but the most striking thing about this story is what is found in 1 Kings 17:14. The provision of the Christ, Comforter, and the Cross were until the day that the LORD sent rain upon the earth. When the rain came the provision was gone. In some instances the rain is a symbol of God’s blessings. However, in the flood the rain was a symbol of God’s judgment. Could it be a possibility that when God moves in judgment after the rapture, He will remove His provision of the Christ, Comforter, and the Cross?