

Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath **I Kings 17:8-24**

Introduction:

Elijah was one of, if not the most popular prophet for all of Israel. He is mentioned several times in the New Testament; including Mt. 17, when he meets with Moses and Jesus and talk about the upcoming death of Christ.

Today, we will notice the relationship that Elijah had with the widow of Zarephath. This widow finds herself in two very desperate situations. The first is because of the famine in the land. The second is because of the death of her son. Today, we will notice her actions and how they impacted her life and the life of her son.

Notice also Lk. 4:25-26

I. Before we get to the widow of Zarephath, notice the setting of the story.

- A. There is a great famine in the land of Israel (17:1-2).
 - 1. This famine was caused by God.
 - 2. Ahab was told that it would not rain until Elijah asked for it to rain.
- B. Elijah was told to go to the Brook Cherith (17:3-7).
 - 1. While there, God provided for Elijah by sending ravens to him with food.
 - 2. After a period of time, the brook dried up and Elijah had to have another source (place) to provide for him.
- C. Keys to remember.
 - 1. God was providing for Elijah by sending the ravens to him.
 - 2. God could have kept doing this for Elijah.
 - a. However, God chose another way.
 - b. It is through this other way (God sending Elijah to Zarephath) that we are introduced to this widow.

II. The first desperate situation for the widow was the severe famine (17:8-16).

- A. God tells Elijah to go to the city of Zarephath (17:8-9).
 - 1. He is told that a widow is going to provide for him when he gets there.
 - 2. Elijah obeys God and goes to Zarephath.
- B. When Elijah sees this woman, he asks her for two things (17:10-11).
 - 1. The first is a cup of water (17:10).
 - 2. As she is going to get the water, he asks her for a morsel of bread (17:11).
 - 3. This is where the story begins to get interesting.
- C. She is very willing to get him the water as soon as he asks for it.
 - 1. However, when he asks for the bread, she hesitates for a moment (17:12).
 - a. She tells him that she only has a little flour and oil.
 - b. She also says that she is going to go prepare it for her and her son, and then they are going to die.
 - 2. Elijah promises her that if she prepares this bread for Elijah, she will never run out of oil and flour (17:13-14).

- D. Even though this woman was in a desperate situation, she was willing to help Elijah.
 - 1. This woman had to have tremendous faith in Elijah.
 - 2. Remember, she had said that she was going to prepare bread for her and her son, and then they were going to die (17:12).
 - 3. She was literally giving all that she had.
- E. This widow demonstrates the need to be willing to help others whenever possible.
 - 1. We are expected to be generous with what we have.
 - a. The early church sold their own possessions so that others could have the necessities of life.
 - 1) Acts 2:44-45 - Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, {45} and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.
 - 2) Acts 4:32, 34-35 - Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. {34} Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, {35} and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.
 - b. When we give to others, we ourselves will be blessed.
 - 1) Pr. 28:27 - He who gives to the poor will not lack, but he who hides his eyes will have many curses.
 - 2) Lk. 6:38 - Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.
 - c. We are not talking about those who are simply bums and are not willing to work for anything.
 - 1) We are talking about those who truly need help and are willing to help themselves.
- F. Because of the generosity of this widow, she and her son did not run out of bread in a time of severe famine.
 - 1. We need to be willing to give to others, just as this widow did.
 - 2. No matter how much or how little we have, there are always others who are worse off than we are.

III. The second desperate situation that she found herself in was the death of her son (17:17-24).

- A. The widow's son became so sick that he died (17:17).
- B. Notice her reaction to his death (17:18).
 - 1. She blames Elijah for his death.

2. “Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?”
 3. Remember, this woman is a widow; and the indication is that this is her only son.
 4. She seems to have forgotten the things that have just happened.
 - a. It was because of Elijah that they had flour and oil to make bread for themselves.
 - b. Without Elijah, she and her son would have died a good while before this situation occurs.
- C. Notice what Elijah does (17:19-24).
1. Elijah takes her son upstairs to the room where he (Elijah) was staying.
 2. He cries out to God (17:20).
 - a. Remember, it was God who had caused this famine.
 - b. It was also God who told Elijah to go to the city of Zarephath.
 3. Elijah stretched himself out on the child three times and prayed for God to revive him (17:21).
 4. The Lord heard his prayer and revived her son (17:22).
- D. Notice the widow’s reaction to her son (17:23-24).
1. Because of this miracle, she believed that Elijah was “a man of God” (17:24).
 2. She had known it before (17:18); but now she truly believed it.
- E. What can this mean for us today?
1. It was miracles that confirmed who Jesus truly was.
 - a. Jn. 20:30-31 - And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; {31} but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.
 - b. Acts 2:22 - Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--
 2. While we do not have the physical miracles today, we do have the word of God to live by.
 - a. Jn. 17:17 - Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.
 - b. Jn. 12:48 - He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him-- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

Conclusion:

This widow in Zarephath found herself in two very desperate situations. First, she and her son were dying because of the famine in the land. Second, her son had died. In both cases, Elijah was there to help her.

Today, we find ourselves in a very desperate situation: lost in sin. It is only through Jesus that we can find the salvation that we need for eternal life.