

term used of Elijah at Cherith (v.4). God meets our needs only when we are where He wants us to be. Obedience is the watchword of the children of God (cf. John 2:5; Luke 5:5). This is faith operating!

b. Its experience--sufficient. The widow did as she was instructed. This may indicate that she truly knew the Lord, but was hopelessly tied up in her circumstances and hence full of unbelief (cf. v. 12 "thy God"). She and her son ate for days and the meal and oil failed not. Nothing more is said in the text about Elijah eating, but the extent of his stay at Zarephath was undoubtedly met by the outstretched arm of a God Who fails not!

c. Its agent--Elijah. The phrase "which He spoke by Elijah" is no idle word. Let's face it, beloved, God does use men. It is forever true that no servant of God is indispensable, but this is not to admit that they are not ordered of the Lord to be dispensers. There is a balance to the truth of God. It was Elijah who said "my word" (v. 1) would bring the rain again, but he knew the rain would come from the Lord (v. 14).

Conclusion: God does provide. He did it for Elijah by the brook and the ravens (vv. 2-7). Here He does it through a widow who brings food in a "vessel" and in her "hand" (vv. 10, 11). This was a change from the desert experience and the ravens. God provided bread and water. Most of us find this an untasty diet, but it was God's provision. The God of Elijah is sufficient for today. Hallelujah. He has provided salvation through Christ. He will provide for His own in every exigency of life. Amen.

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES ON ELIJAH
"The Widow's House at Zerephath"
1 Kings 17:8-16

Introduction

1. Elijah was just a man, but a man of God! His life style is clearly and succinctly presented in the Word: He stood before the Lord God of Israel (v. 1). Would to God that more were inclined to take this same posture.

2. Amongst the saints, there are three matters which gain constant attention: 1) God's guidance. How often one needs this, asks for this, and finds that God does provide it. No one can study the life of Elijah without seeing God guide! 2) God's discipline. Troubles and trials to come into our lives. None finds that the path to Glory is strewn with roses. One can find with joy that Elijah had his deep experiences too and this will bring encouragement. 3) God's provision. Who has not found himself in the midst of dreadful need. Does God supply? Yes, He does! Elijah's life proves this too.

3. The text of this study tells of God's marvelous provision. The entire incident is a miracle. He had gone to Cherith because God told him to go (vv.3, 5). Now God gives new orders to remove to Zerephath (v.9). From the desert and wady of Cherith, the call to Elijah is the sea coast area and the heights around Sidon. It was a long trek. What took place at Zerephath is recorded in the Word. Notice these truths from the incident:

1. THE WIDOW'S UNRELIEVED SITUATION.

Elijah was told that when he got to Zarephath he would find a widow there. It was absolutely fantastic to acknowledge that God knows where people are (cf. Gen. 16:13, 14). She is described:

a. Her resources.

1) I have no cake. The reference here is to a portion of bread and not a sweet. The small

amount of meal she did have was insignificant to her (cf. John 6:9).

2) I have no oil. The pail or bucket that is mentioned here was for carrying water, hence not some 44 gallon drum (cf. Gen 24:24). Only one verb is used for the meal and the oil. The word "little" comes from a verb root meaning to scrape, hence she just had scraps! The handful of meal was consistent with the supply of oil.

3) I have no fire. The draught caused other problems beyond food. Apparently even fire wood was scarce and hence "two sticks" were about all that could be mustered. Things were at the bottom!

NOTE: The widow affirms all of this to be true according to "thy God" (v. 12) suggesting that she either did not know Him or had lost confidence in His power to help.

b. Her distress. All discomforts of the saints do not arise from the Evil One or disobedience. the Book of Job is a divine commentary on that subject. God had a purpose in her frightful situation. It concerned Elijah and the providence of God.

c. Her hope. Apparently the widow had lost hope. She looked at the meal, the oil, and the sticks and concluded it was the end. She expected to die (v. 12). Her problem was a real one because it is so relevant for us today. All she could see pointed to death. But she didn't look in the right direction--UP! Often one's evaluation of things is indicative of his spiritual condition (cf. Num. 13:33).

2. THE PROPHET'S UNDAUNTED CONVICTION.

a. About the Word of God. Elijah is an excellent example of one who was directed by the Word of God alone (cf. vv. 8, 14, 16). Earlier he had done the same thing (vv. 1, 2, 5). This is the way it should be (Matt. 4:4). The Hebrew for

"word" again supports the "spoken Word of God" or the idea of verbal inspiration.

b. About the will of God. The simple and abrupt point here is that God must come first. The word "cake" here is different than above and suggests a round portion of bread. It was to be provided for the prophet ahead of the woman and her son. The principle which God enforces is that He must be preeminent (Col. 1:18; Matt. 6:31-34). Poverty levels are not important with God's position in the life. He must be first! If God were really getting His portion as outlined here, the results in God's work would show it.

c. About the faithfulness of God. Elijah spoke against fear. That is the vice of unbelief and the flesh. That verb in Hebrew means to "tremble." Unbelief does shake while faith stands. Backing up this admonition not to fear is the "Lord God of Israel." Both "Elohim" and "Jehovah" are combined in this title and the nation is included. Three parts are noted to the promise:

1) Meal will not fail. The verb "waste" means to be consumed. There would be no end to the "handful." Hallelujah!

2) Oil will not fail. The verb here means that the oil would not be diminished. Even though the oil would be used, it would remain constant in its quantity. That, beloved, is God's immediate creative power in practice!

3) Rain will yet come. The "untils" of the Bible are so wonderful. Rain would yet come when ordered by God (cf. v. 1).

NOTE: Fears change to cheers through the promises of God (cf. 1 Kings 8:56).

3. THE LORD'S UNFAILING PROVISION.

a. Its basis--obedience. Had not Elijah done as God commanded, the provision for the widow and himself would not have been made. There is an important three letter Hebrew word which occurs three times in the text: "there." It is the same