

BIBLE STORY: ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH

1 Kings 17:8-24

Central Thoughts

- The Lord sends famine and hardship upon the earth as judgment against sin and impenitence.
- The Lord called Elijah to preach the Word and promised to provide for him during persecution, suffering, and hardship.
- The Lord provides for His ministers through those who have received the Word of God and the gift of salvation from them.
- God loves the lowliest and most insignificant of sinners and desires that they receive the gift of salvation in Christ.
- The Lord uses hardship and adversity to draw us closer to Him and to the promises of His Word.
- Through the struggle with sin and death we learn that the promises of the Gospel are true, comforting, and life-giving.

Discussion Questions

NOTE: The Lord had sent a great famine upon the land of Canaan and the surrounding countries because of Israel's and King Ahab's rebellion against the Lord. The prophet Elijah was being hunted by King Ahab of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and by Ahab's wife Jezebel who was from the region of Tyre and Sidon. The Lord promises to sustain His faithful prophets under persecution, even as they continue to preach His Word to those who do not know the Lord. Elijah was sent to preach the Word in the foreign country of his enemy Jezebel and to be provided for temporarily by a widow of that region.

Why did the Lord send Elijah to the village of Zarephath in Sidon?

To be provided for by a widow of Zarephath

Why did Elijah go to Zarephath?

The Lord had called him to bring the Word of the Lord to Zarephath and to be provided for by this widow.

In what circumstance did Elijah find the widow?

She and her only son were poor and were so affected by the famine that they were gathering sticks for a fire to prepare their last meal before they died of starvation.

What did the Prophet Elijah call her to do?

Bring a cup of water and a morsel of bread to the prophet before she prepared anything for herself and her son.

How did the widow respond to Elijah's request?

She swore by the Lord God of Elijah that she had nothing left and that she and her son were about to prepare their last meal before they died.

What did Elijah proclaim to her?

He proclaimed the gift of salvation to her and her son, saying, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first...and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son."

What promise from the Lord did Elijah give to the widow?

He promised to provide for her and her son, saying, "The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the Lord sends rain on the earth."

What had Elijah proclaimed to the widow by the word, "Do not fear!"

He proclaimed the gift of forgiveness and salvation to this woman.

To what had Elijah's proclamation called the widow?

She was called to faith in the Lord.

What does Jesus say believers will do for those who proclaim God's Word to them? (See Matthew 10:42)

"Give them a cup of cool water" in the name of the Lord and provide for their temporal support.

How did Jesus describe the Lord's love for sinners, even though many in Israel had rejected Him? (See Luke 4:25-26)

He sent the prophet Elijah to the Gentile woman of Zarephath to call her to faith.

What did the widow's ongoing support of Elijah confess?

Her faith in the Lord's Word.

What further adversity came upon the widow?

Her son became ill and died.

What did the death of her son tempt her to believe?

That Elijah was sent by God to punish her for her sins.

What did the death of her son cause her to doubt?

That her sins were forgiven.

What did Elijah do?

He carried the pain and suffering of the widow to the Lord, just as Jesus did for us in His suffering and death. He cried out to the Lord on behalf of the widow, stretching himself out three times upon the child, asking that the soul of the boy would be returned to his body.

What does the number three remind us of?

The Holy Trinity, the threefold Kyrie, and the resurrection of our Lord on the third day.

What did Elijah do after the boy had been raised to life again?

He gave him back to his mother just as Jesus had done when he raised the Widow of Nain's son (See Luke 7:11-17).

What does this reunion signify?

In the resurrection, there shall be a blessed reunion with those we love who have died in the Lord.

What did the widow confess after receiving her son back from the dead?

That Elijah was a man of God and that the Word of the Lord that he preached was the truth.

Meditation on the Bible Story

It is the Lord who sends his prophets, and it is the Lord who provides for them during persecution. Trouble, adversity, and hardship do not deter the Lord's call to preach the Gospel to those who do not know Him. The Lord uses persecution and suffering to proclaim the message of the suffering and death of His Son for the salvation of all sinners. Through suffering and hardship, sent by the Lord upon an impenitent people, the prophet Elijah faithfully preached the Word of the Lord in Israel and then to the lowly widow of Zarephath. God's love for the unworthy and His desire for the salvation of a single sinner is seen in the call of Elijah to preach to this widow. By the Word of the Lord, she is called to faith. Out of her faith in the Lord she provides for the prophet. When confronted with the death of her son, the widow doubts her salvation, but the Lord is faithful to His promises. Through the things that she suffered, she learned to believe that the Lord's Word is true. It is the same for us! As Jesus bore the sin and death of the world and was raised to life again on the third day, we know that He will use the suffering and adversity in our own lives to draw us closer to Him. His Word is true, and it gives life from the dead. On the last day, there shall be a blessed reunion with all those who have died in the Lord.

Prayer on the Bible Story

O Lord, as You called the prophet Elijah to preach Your Word without fear and to be provided for by the lowly widow of Zarephath, so grant us the courage to believe Your holy Word and at all times to entrust ourselves to the precious promises of new life and salvation that You have made to us in Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



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