

THE LIFE & TIMES OF ELIJAH (Part 3)

“Zarephath – Advanced Training” (1 Kings 17:8-24)

INTRO: Elijah appeared on the scene in one of Israel’s darkest hours. As suddenly as he appeared before wicked King Ahab (17:1), he is gone. Directed by God, first for his own protection, but mostly for his continuing education to prepare him for future battles. Today, Advanced Training . . .

REVIEWING LESSONS . . . Same FOUR WORDS . . .

I. (v.9a) COMMAND

- A. *Where To Go* (“Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon”) – MAP: About 100 mile journey through Ahab’s domain. The good news was it was time to go; the bad news was to Zarephath. Zarephath was Queen Jezebel’s home town (16:31). It was the HQ of Baal worship.
 - 1. “Kerith” - to cut off, to file down, to whittle away
 - 2. “Zarephath” - a smelting house, a place of refining, a melt down.
- B. *What To Do* - “and stay there” (about 2 years)
- C. *What It Says to us* - God seeks to refine our faith and develop it (1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12ff; 5:9ff).

II. (v.9b) PROMISE

- A. Principle - God never commands without His promise of provision.
- B. Means - Not through a wealthy merchant, but a gentile, destitute widow. Before it was big, black, loud, nasty ravens. Now from a poor widow, even her last meal (vv. 10b-12). Neither ravens or widows are likely means of God’s provision. Elijah accepted both as humbling as they were. Humbling tasks ready us for higher tasks. Never despise God’s means of provision. Many find it easy to give, but hard to receive. When we do what He commands, He promises to take care of us - don’t question His means. God had not only spoken with Elijah, but also the widow (v.9). See Lk. 4:16-30 Jesus 1st sermon.
- C. The Place of Provision (v.9 “Go...and *stay there*...in *that place* to supply...”). The place of appointment is only place of provision.

III. (v.10a) RESPONSE

Again, no discussion or debate. His obedience was instant and complete. Yet, I’m sure he wondered what God was doing. We want to applaud service, God applauds obedience. In each case it was Elijah’s obedience (and hers) that preceeded God’s provision.

IV. (vv.10b-24) TEST

- A. (vv. 10b-16) The dwindling barrel provided at least two tests for Elijah:
 - 1. TEST #1 (vv. 10b-11): First Impressions - It was humbling enough to be fed by ravens, but now by a destitute widow in heathen Zarephath - and her last meal. He was begging bread from a poverty stricken

woman. She was no “merry widow”. Only speaks three times (12, 18, 24) and two are negative (12, 18). See Pro. 21:9,19... First impressions can be so deceptive and discouraging. Elijah could have quit. He refused to yield to first impressions. Later he’d face overwhelming odds at Carmel.

- 2. TEST #2 (vv. 12-16): Physical Impossibility - Only had a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. How going to feed three people? Her circumstances belied God’s Word (v.9). Though physically impossible, Elijah knew God comes through when He says He will. God is faithful to His promises (vv.13-14). Every day that widow met God in her little kitchen, when she looked into that jar and jug (vv.15-16).
- B. (vv.17-24) The dying son was more her test than Elijah’s. She had obeyed (v.15) and would now be tested. First her husband died, now her son!
 - v. 17 - A *Severe Trial* came some time later (about 2 yrs.). Her son, the light of her eyes, the joy of her heart, & her hope for the future, all gone.
 - v. 18 - A *Bitter Complaint* - Her son’s death awakened in her sad memories of the past. The man of God’s holiness and God’s goodness surfaced her sinfulness. Whatever her sin, she felt it bad enough to kill her son.
 - v. 19 - A *Strange Request* - Elijah, showing no defensiveness or impatience, moves into action. A true man of God will always act different than others. He takes dead boy upstairs alone.
 - v. 20 - A *Confused Prophet* cries out to God. Though she thought she knew why, Elijah didn’t. But, he did know who, which is better. Always talk to God about things you don’t understand.
 - vv. 21-22 - A *Prevailing Prayer* - Elijah not only asks God for a great thing, but gave himself wholly to it. Three times he stretched himself over the boy - body to body, arm to arm, leg to leg. He not only prayed, but he did all he could. Many will pray, few get involved. The first recorded resurrection. 3 in OT & NT . . .
 - vv. 23-24 - An *Honoring Confession* - Can you imagine the reunion as he placed her son in her arms? Now, she knew. The miracle of the jar & jug had not convinced her, but a son passing from death to life did! God’s Giver of life & Source of Truth.

LESSONS: on PPT . . .

CONC: When we show up in obedience, God shows up in power. Elijah’s training was over for now. His God had ordered him to leave and hide, now ordered him to go and present (18:1-2). The lessons from the obscurity of Kerith and humility of Zarephath had been learned. Through intense training, he knew he could rely on God. God’s Part? Guide and Provide. Our Part? Trust and Obey (Pro. 3:5-6).