

Elijah and Elisha Class 4
1 Kings 17:8-16

Under Old Business: Last week John Hannon asked a question about the relative dates of Omri's reign to Asa's reign in Judah in 1 Kings 16. "At first glance, the chronology for Omri's reign seems wrong. The text says he ruled twelve years, beginning with Asa's 31st year. Of course, Asa served 41 years which seems to create a gap of 2 years. What has occurred, however, is that the author reflects 'coreign' of Tibni and Omri and the length of time Omri ruled on his own. Thus, Omri comes to power in Asa's 27th year after Zimri's murder of Elah, fights Tibni until the 31st year of Asa, and dies in Asa's 38th year, a total of 12 years by the northern means of reckoning reigns. Suggested time line is as follows:

27th year of Asa. Elah assassinated

27th of Asa. Zimri begins to reign, reigned for 7 days.

27th year of Asa. Zimri commits suicide. Omri and Tibni vie for kingship.

31st year of Asa. Omri began to reign, apparently after Tibni is dead...four year civil war ends.

38th year of Asa. Omri died. Ahab began to rule.

Last week we saw Elijah's battle with Baal and Baalism begin. This is a heavy weight bout. The drought was round one...which went decisively for Elijah and his God. God stopped the rain...and the land was in famine because of the leadership of Ahab and the sin in which he led Israel to commit. Yahweh stopped the rain at Elijah's request and declared it would not rain until Elijah said it would.

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Round Two: Having provided miraculously for Elijah by the Cherith brook...the wadi finally dried up and God called him to go to Jezebel's hometown. God directed him to a pagan widow in Zarephath, near Sidon. God told Elijah that he had commanded a widow to feed him. This widow was at the end...she had virtually nothing left to eat for her son and herself due to the resulting famine. But Elijah waited by the gate of the city. He saw a widow gathering sticks and he asked her for water. She, in an act of kindness, goes to get it for him...he then asks for bread. She has almost nothing to feed herself and her son. Yet this Jew says, "Give me some bread." In round one...God provided for Elijah miraculously. In round two...God does miracles or signs and wonders through Elijah.

She replies that she cannot give him anything to eat because she has so little. She swears an oath to Yahweh that she really has almost nothing. She believes she and her son will eat this last bit of food and die. And now this Jew comes to Lebanon and asks for bread...what is he thinking?

Elijah waves off her concern and says "Fear not! Go and do as you have said...only first make me a little cake of your flour and then make something for yourself and your son...and your flour will not run out, and your oil shall not fail until God ends the drought and famine. So her dilemma...shall I feed this Jewish prophet my last morsel and believe his incredible promise or eat what I have and die with my son? God amplifies his promise...Elijah identifies his God as the God of Israel...while standing in Baal country and states, "The jar of meal shall not be spent and the cruse of oil shall not fail until the day that the Lord...not Baal sends rain

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upon the earth.” And she did it! The King of Israel would not trust Yahweh or his prophet but this pagan woman from Zarephath, Jezebel’s hometown, and the heartland of Baalism does. AND...the meal was not spent and the cruse of oil did not fail...and he ate and they ate for many days...just as Elijah said, see Deut 18:22. The widow has learned that God’s people have what they need and what Baal cannot provide. This is done in the heartland of Baal, in Phoenicia.

Zarephath: A village or town between Tyre in the south and Sidon in the north of Lebanon. Zarephath means a place of crucibles or furnaces for smelting and refining or tempering metal. So Elijah is directed from an isolated retreat to be in an urbanized and somewhat industrialized environment. Some suggest these furnaces were for refining metallic ores-i.e. blast furnaces.

Here we see several principles of faith...

Giving to God financially is an act of trust...giving away wealth requires at least contentment with what one has if not dependence upon God to provide for my yet unknown and unforeseen future.

If I trust God to meet my needs, I am then free to meet the needs of others. To do this I must know, understand, and rely on God’s promises.

Notice the power of weakness...the power of the little. She has little...no husband, a dependent son, little food, little means to cook it. Yet this little incident, in this little known life, the giving of a little morsel of bread, and little cup of water in one little act...changed the world! God had little also...one little known prophet, with no supplies, and no support. Elijah’s God is enough...he is all the God Elijah will ever need.

Here we also see a distinctive feature of God’s character see Deut 10:18 and 14:29. Notice also Psalm 68:5 and

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the larger context of Psalm 68 as a hymn to Baal that has been taken over as a prize of Yahweh's triumph and exposure of Baal as a fraud.

Notice the freeness of God's sovereign grace to give to whomever he pleases...wherever he pleases...whenever he pleases.

Notice also that real faith is founded on real events occurring in real time to real people...by a real God.

Let us notice also the parallels NT writers make to Elijah's ministry and the times in which they lived.

See James 5:17

See Luke 4:25

Homework: 1 Kings 17:17-24. Read and seek to make connections to the NT and be prepared to share what you find next week.