

Elijah and The Widow of Zerephath

Lesson Two

1 Kings 17: 8 – 24

1 Kings 18: 1 - 16

How will Elijah deal with the hard times of drought and famine that will befall the land in this lesson?

Close to the city Elijah met a woman gathering wood. God identified her as the widow he had told him to meet. Elijah greeted her and asked if he could have a drink of water. As she was going to get it he called after her and said "Could you bring me some bread as well?" The woman replied, "I have only enough oil and flour left to make a loaf of bread for myself and my son and after that there is nothing so we will starve" "Have courage and hope" replied Elijah "and I promise you that your bowl will never be empty of flour and your jar will always have oil until God sends the rain".

The woman must have had a very strong faith as she did not question Elijah's instructions. She did as she was told and neither her, her son or Elijah wanted for food until the drought ended. Lessons we can learn from this is that we have to learn to trust the Lord implicitly in all aspects of our life and know that all our needs will be met. Note that we say needs and not wants.

One day the widow's son became sick and died. She was so distraught that she accused Elijah of coming to punish her sins by causing the death of her son. How often do we lash out at the people who love us and do the most for us when we are in trouble?

Elijah had a room at the top of her house so he ordered the woman to give him the child's body and he carried him upstairs to his own room. Laying him on the bed he cried to God asking that the boy's life be restored. He stretched himself over the body three times and God took pity on the mother and against all odds restored life to the boy.

This was the first instance of a person being resuscitated and Elijah makes it quite clear that he expected an answer to his prayer rather than bodily contact although this could be seen as mouth to mouth resuscitation. God caused it to work. Then the woman said to Elijah "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth"

By this time the drought had lasted three years. King Ahab had searched high and low for Elijah and the remaining prophets during this time but had been unsuccessful. The king had a servant Obadiah who was in charge of King Ahab's household. Unknown to the king Obadiah was a faithful follower of Yahweh, and had hidden 100 prophets in caves because Jezebel was hounding and killing any prophets she could find. He hid them in groups of 50 in two separate caves and had provided them with food.

The king sent out Obadiah to search in any valleys and springs to find grass and fodder to feed the animals in the kingdom. The king decided to go with Obadiah to search in the valleys and springs and they split up. The king went one direction and Obadiah the other.

In the meantime, God had shown himself to Elijah and instructed him to go to Ahab with the message that God would send rain. As Obadiah was walking along Elijah met him. Obadiah recognised Elijah and was amazed that he was still alive. "Is it really you Elijah my Lord?" "Yep, it's me" said Elijah "now I want you to go and tell your master that I am here."

Obadiah freaks out "What sin have I committed that you are handing your servant into Ahab's hands to be put to death!" "You realise he has been searching everywhere for you. There is not a nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to look for you. And whenever a nation or

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kingdom claimed you were not there he made them swear they could not find you – and now you want me to go to Ahab and tell him you are here!!! Obadiah at this point is panic stricken. He's scared witless that if he tells the king about Elijah and the king cannot find him then Obadiah will be for the chop plus the fact he has been hiding prophets in caves.

He told Elijah that he had been a faithful follower of the Lord since his youth. **"As the Lord almighty lives whom I serve,"** said Elijah, **"I will see Ahab today"** Scared as he was, Obadiah went to the king and told him and the king went to meet Elijah.

It is interesting that all this time Ahab had been searching for Elijah but Elijah could only be found when God was ready. All his searching was in vain.

"Is that you who has brought all this catastrophe on Israel?" said Ahab. **"No"** Elijah answered, **"it's you and all your predecessors have caused this trouble. You have brought it on yourselves. You have forsaken God's commandments and worshipped the Baals."** It's about time we found out just how effective all your idols and gods are so gather all Israel at Mount Carmel.

Brings the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah (these were female prophetesses) who eat at Jezebels table. Interesting to realise that Jezebel surrounded herself with all these prophets and Ahab condoned her actions and followed along like a sheep.

Ahab sent messengers throughout the land and brought the prophets to Mount Carmel. Picture the scene. Here they are up on this mountain there is 850 Baal and Asherah prophets plus all the people. A daunting scenario as Elijah faces them on his own.

With no preamble Elijah comes straight to the point. **"How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him. But if you wish to worship the foreign Gods, The Baals, follow them."** There was silence. The people would be afraid many knew that there was only one true God but they also enjoyed the pleasures and other benefits that came from following Ahab in his idolatrous worship. Elijah was the only one to stand boldly and publicly against the prophets. When the people failed to respond Elijah then asked that a test be made between the foreign Gods and his own.

A good point to make here is the difference between false prophets and true prophets. False prophets worked for political purposes to benefit themselves. They held positions of great wealth, gave false messages and spoke only what the people wanted to hear. The false prophets were an obstacle to bringing god's word to the people. They would bring messages that contradicted the words of the true prophets. They gave messages that appealed to the people's sinful natures and comforted their fears. False prophets told the people what they wanted to hear and true prophets told God's truth.

True prophets worked for spiritual purposes to serve God and the people. They owned little or nothing, spoke only true messages and they spoke only what God told them to say no matter how unpopular that was.

Next week we will see what happened on Mount Carmel.