

1 Kings Chapter 17 Commentary

1Ki 17:1 ¶ "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

Adam Clarke and Matthew Henry, in their commentaries, tell us: God's prophet Elijah comes into the picture, much like Melchisedec, without parentage given. We are only told where he came from, which is Gilead. Some commentators seem to think he was an angel, but we are told he is a man in **Jas 5:17 "Elias** (another spelling of Elijah) **was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.**" They also tell us that Elijah was sent to Israel only, never to Judah.

This judicial judgment of God is in accordance with God's proclamation by Moses seen in **De 11:16-17; 16 "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; 17 And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you."** Reminding us that God never forgets what he has pronounced will come to pass. Since there is only to be rain by the mouth of Elijah the prophet, it demonstrates the inability of the false gods to overthrow God's word of truth. This should have convinced Israel, and Ahab, to repent and return to following God.

Elijah gives us the picture of a faithful servant, or child of God, proclaiming the judicial wrath of God against the sins, amid voluminous idolatry, whoredom, and all manner of sexual sins, rebellion against God with sin of all kinds, in a nation ruled by a most wicked king and queen.

The boldness of Elijah's prophecy, to a king who could have had him killed, demonstrates that it is imperative, that the children of God stand up denouncing sin for what it is, just as God has Elijah deliver a judicial judgment against King Ahab for the abominations, which he has fathered and fostered under his rule of the nation Israel. This punishment is that it will not rain again until Elijah says it will, which will be three years and six months.

The Children of God, and especially the ministers of God, should not be afraid to pronounce the judicial judgment of God against sin, and rebellion against God, which may not only have consequences here in time, but with the judicial punishment of eternal damnation in the eternal lake of fire.

Children of God should live their lives in Christ, proclaiming their fear of the eternal judicial judgment of the one true God, who will give judgment of eternal damnation, upon those who follow their inherited sin nature, which is following Satan and blatantly disregarding the word of God.

2 "And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 5 So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. 7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land."

God, knowing the wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel, and that they will attempt to kill Elijah, tells Elijah to hide by the brook Cherith. Sometimes it may be necessary that we speak the truth of God and then lay low while God orchestrates things according to his will and purpose. God tells Elijah that He has commanded the ravens to bring him bread and flesh in the morning and evening, and he can drink from the brook. We see that God commanded here for Elijah to eat bread and flesh in the morning and evening. This warns us against those who would prescribe a vegetarian lifestyle upon us. Vegetarian lifestyle is like rejecting to accept the whole word of God and only believing the parts that suit the flesh. After all, do we not figuratively eat bread only, which is emblematic of the flesh of the Son of God, at the Lord's Supper.

God knows that it is necessary that the life of Elijah be spared, because the judgment of God proclaims it will only rain when so commanded by the mouth of Elijah. Why else would God hide Elijah? If Elijah were present among the people, when the drought got bad, everyone would be calling upon him to end it sooner than God had prophesied, and this would cut short God's judicial judgment against Israel.

We notice that God uses ravens to bring food to Elijah. These are unclean birds who live on the carnage of dead things. Yet, they bring to Elijah things that are fresh that he may eat and be strengthened day by day. This

demonstrates to us, God sometimes uses evil and ungodly people, to bring to pass his will and purpose in the lives of his people. God will still punish the ungodly, for their ungodly deeds, but uses them providentially to fulfill his own purposes. After all, God only has sinners to work with here on earth. The only person, in human form, which was sinless has already came to earth and returned to heaven, which is Jesus Christ.

Now preacher, you just told us to proclaim the judicial judgments of God, but you didn't say anything about hiding afterwards, and here God tells Elijah to go hide. That is right. We are to stand firm upon the word and principles of God, without fearing what man can do to us as seen in **Heb 13:5-6; 5 "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."** Actually, God hiding Elijah is a picture of God hiding us in the truth of his word, that we fall not into the hands of the enemy.

Elijah does as God has commanded and is fed of the ravens by the brook Kidron until it dries up because of the drought of which Elijah had prophesied. Now, if you want to talk about the providence of God, we can surely see the providence of God in Elijah's life. The same principle is true in the life of every child of God, who serves God with their whole heart. After all, we have the promise that God will supply our every need, seen in **Php 4:19; 18 "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."** Paul is telling the Philippians: I have my needs met by your supply to me, through the grace of God, and God will continue to supply your every need. God will always make a way of provision for his faithful servants.

8 ¶ "And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. 12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. 15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. 16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah."

The brook Cherith having dried up, God sends Elijah to a widow woman in Zarephath of Zidon for sustenance. One of the definitions of Zidon is *to victual or take provision for a journey*. God tells Elijah that He has commanded this widow woman to sustain you. We point out that God does not send Elijah to some well to do person, or someone of great authority, rather to a perishing widow woman. This is a prophetic picture of what we are told in **1Co 1:26-29; 26 "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence."** God's people are known as meek and lowly, not high, and mighty.

Elijah goes, as God has commanded, and as he enters the city, he sees the widow woman gathering sticks. Notice that Elijah knew this was the woman to whom he was sent. Elijah tells her to bring him a little water, and as she is going, he tells her to make him a morsel of bread that he may eat.

The woman explains her desperate situation telling Elijah: I am gathering these sticks to make me and my son a cake of bread to eat, and then we will starve to death as we have nothing else. Elijah tells her to do as she has said, but first make him a little cake, declaring that the meal barrel, and the oil cruse, will not fail until it rains.

We point out that God has made this woman aware that Elijah the prophet is coming, because she recognizes him as a man of God and obeys his voice. By the exercise of her faith in the word of God, it comes to pass just as Elijah has told the woman.

Consider all the faith, exercised to this point, by both Elijah and the widow woman:

- Elijah delivers a message of judicial judgment against the king and queen, and Israel, in danger of losing his life, trusting that God will preserve his life.
- Elijah follows God's command to hide by the brook and be fed by the ravens night and morning.
- Elijah goes on this journey to the widow woman's house in city of Zarephath in the country of Zidon, which is the native country of Jezebel, who is seeking to destroy Elijah.
- The widow woman, who is preparing a last supper for her and her firstborn son, obeys the voice of the prophet of God, believing his prophesy will come true. Thus, we continue the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament Church.
- Elijah exercises great faith that God will do what he has said in supplying their needs.

Do we have true faith in our lives? Do we exercise that faith and see the hand of God move mightily in our lives? Or are we hiding our candle under a bushel? Faith requires us to have full belief that God will do what he says. Faithfulness to God and Christ will always bring sufficient abundance into our lives as children of God.

Matthew Henry brings to our attention that Jezebel is Elijah's greatest enemy, yet God sends Elijah to the country of her nativity as she was from Zidon, which was inhabited by Gentiles. We know this from **1Ki 16:30-31; 30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. 31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.**"

Why would God send Elijah there? This is the last place that Jezebel would think of looking for Elijah.

Matthew Henry points out that Elijah is the first prophet sent to the Gentiles as demonstrated in **Lu 4:25-26; 23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. 24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. 25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.**"

This is prophetic of Paul turning to the Gentiles. How? We can be assured that Elijah was hated by his fellow countrymen because of the drought of which he is believed to be the source. However, the source is the sins of Israel in idolatry and forsaking God. Therefore, being hated of his own people, God sends him to the Gentiles.

Matthew Henry also points out that Jesus only went among the Gentiles once as seen in **Mt 15:21 ¶ Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.**"

We understand that a barrel is not what we call a barrel today. Rather, it was an earthen jar which could be sealed up, which would keep parasites from spoiling the contents. We believe the cruse to simply be a bottle, or some such like container, which could also be sealed up. Why would these containers need to be sealed up? Why is the gospel sealed up? So that only God's people can be effectually moved by it? Because it is not meant for the unsaved to understand it. If the earthly mind, devoid of the spirit of God, is applied to the word of God, it will taint and spoil the source of life to God's people. How? Because the earthly mind, with the inherited sin nature, can only convince itself that it is able to save itself eternally, without the Spirit of God being involved.

17 ¶ "And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. 18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? 19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. 20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? 21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. 22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. 24 And the woman said to

Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth."

The widow's son dies. She comes to Elijah and says: have you come to call my sin to remembrance? We do not know what her sin was, but it does not matter, for sin is sin, and we are all sinners. We suspect that this widow would have believed that she had committed some sin for which God was now punishing her. On the other hand, she must have thought she had gained great favor with God because of her service to Elijah, God's prophet. The death of her son is a reminder to her that God's blessings are contingent upon the will of God, not on works before God. The same is true in our lives. How? We are given the gift of eternal life and eternal forgiveness of sins, by the grace of God. We cannot earn it by service. Our service to God and his people is a sign to them that we are a child of God, not that we are earning our eternal life.

This son that died, did eat of the miraculously supplied bread, yet he dies. This brings us to a scripture in **John 6:48-50; 48 "I am that bread of life. 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die."** This child is as the children of Israel that did eat bread in the wilderness, which was supplied daily by God for their sustenance. However, they all had to go the way of the earth and die. Though we be children of God and partake of the bread of life, here in time; we too shall die the natural death. We too have a Saviour, living with us, with the power to resurrect us from the dead to eternal life in Christ.

Elijah takes the child to an upper room, and after doing all we read of, God restores the son's soul and restores his life. **1 Kings 17:21 "And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again."** We understand what the soul is from **Genesis 2:7 "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."** Wherefore, God returned the breath of life to the body.

Did you notice that Elijah carried the son to the upper room where he resided? This is figurative of when a child of God dies, the soul immediately goes to the upper room, the place that Jesus has prepared for his people. In the resurrection of the dead in Christ, the same soul will return to the resurrected body of the dead in Christ, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. What a beautiful prophetic picture in this widow's son's resurrection.

Elijah delivers the son alive to the widow. Now the widow knows that Elijah is indeed a prophet of God. She now has surety of salvation in God, through Elijah, and the word of God, just as we have surety of eternal salvation in Jesus Christ, and in the Word of God.

We have similar circumstances demonstrated in the life of Elisha in **2 Kings 4:32-35; 32 "And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. 33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD. 34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. 35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes."** This is demonstrated again in **Acts 20:9-12; 9 "And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. 11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. 12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted."**

Thus, it is with every newborn child of God. In the new birth, (the second birth, as Jesus said, "**you must be born again**") we are raised from the state of being dead in trespasses and sins, to life in Christ. When we are born again, we come to know that Jesus is indeed the Christ and Saviour of our souls, for Jesus has restored our souls to us in newness of life in Christ. Thus, we can see many comparable things done in the life of Elijah, and these references, and the things done by Jesus Christ in his earthly ministry.

To what end is all this done? It reminds us that we too live in a world of idolatry, and just as the widow's child was resurrected for the glory of God by his servant. So was Lazarus resurrected by Jesus for the glory of God and his Son, Jesus Christ. At the return of King Jesus, when all of God's people are resurrected in the dead in Christ rising first, and we which are alive and remain shall be changed from mortality to immortality, it is all for the glory of God the Father and God the Son, Hallelujah! Praise, ye the Lord!