

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 1 KINGS 17

1 KINGS 17:1-7 - DROUGHT IN ISRAEL

V. 1 - NO RAIN. THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN A SIGNIFICANT EVENT FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS. FIRST OFF, THE LAND IS SUSTAINED BY AN AGRARIAN BASED ECONOMY. THEY FARM, GROW CROPS, RAISE ANIMALS. THIS IS HOW THEY SURVIVE AND MAKE A LIVING. AND SECONDLY, THE PRIMARY GOD THAT ISRAEL HAS TURNED TO IN THEIR FORSAKING OF THE LORD IS BAAL AND ASHERAH, WHO WERE BOTH DEITIES ASSOCIATED WITH AGRICULTURE AND RAIN SPECIFICALLY.

ESV STUDY BIBLE (1 KINGS 17:1): "IN CANAANITE RELIGION, BAAL HAD AUTHORITY OVER RAIN AND FERTILITY. THE ABSENCE OF RAIN MEANT THE ABSENCE OF BAAL, WHO MUST PERIODICALLY SUBMIT TO THE GOD OF DEATH MOT (DURING THE DRY SEASON), ONLY TO BE REVIVED AT A LATER DATE AND ONCE AGAIN WATER THE EARTH (DURING THE RAINY SEASON). THIS CYCLICAL AND POLYTHEISTIC VIEW OF REALITY IS THE FOCUS OF ELIJAH'S CHALLENGES. ELIJAH WORSHIPS A SINGLE GOD WHO LIVES AND YET, WHILE LIVING, CAN DENY BOTH DEW AND RAIN TO THE LAND. THE LORD, NOT BAAL, BRINGS FERTILITY; AND THE LORD'S PRESENCE IN JUDGMENT, NOT HIS ABSENCE IN DEATH, LEADS TO INFERTILITY."

"HOWEVER ONE CUTS IT, BAAL WAS A FERTILITY GOD, A STORM GOD, WHO, AMONG OTHER LIFE-GIVING ACTIVITIES, SENT RAIN TO (BRING LIFE AND PRODUCE TO) THE EARTH. "...SUCH METEOROLOGICAL DISPLAYS WERE SIGNS OF BAAL'S VITALITY. ELIJAH'S "NO DEW OR RAIN" THEN CONSTITUTES A CHALLENGE TO BAAL. AHAB AND ISRAEL WILL NOW BE ABLE TO SEE WHAT SORT OF FERTILITY GOD BAAL IS. IF HE CANNOT PRODUCE IN THE AREA OF HIS EXPERTISE, IN HIS SPECIALTY, HIS REPUTATION WILL SUFFER A SHATTERING BLOW." (DALE RALPH DAVIS, "FOCUS ON THE BIBLE: 1 KINGS" PAGE 202)

REMEMBER WHAT VERSE 1 TELLS US ELIJAH SAID TO KING AHAB - "AS THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL LIVES, BEFORE WHOM I STAND, SURELY THERE SHALL BE NEITHER DEW NOR RAIN THESE YEARS, EXCEPT BY MY WORD." THIS ENTIRE EVENT WAS A DEMONSTRATION OF THE POWER AND MIGHT OF THE LORD. ELIJAH TELLS AHAB ABOUT THE DROUGHT BEFORE THE DROUGHT BEGAN.

V. 4-5 - RAVENS WILL PROVIDE FOR ELIJAH DURING THIS TIME. HE IS SENT TO A REGION FAR AWAY FROM AHAB.

"EAST OF THE JORDAN" - ELIJAH HIDES IN AN INHOSPITABLE AREA WHERE THERE IS NO NORMAL FOOD SUPPLY. GOD IS NEVERTHELESS ABLE TO PROVIDE FOR HIM, FOR GOD CONTROLS NOT JUST THE RAIN BUT THE WHOLE NATURAL ORDER, INCLUDING THE RAVENS (V. 6). (ESV STUDY BIBLE, 1 KINGS 17:5)

1 KINGS 17:8-12 - ELIJAH & WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH

V. 10-12 - THE DROUGHT HAD AFFECTED THIS REGION AS WELL. THE WOMAN IS WILLING TO GIVE ELIJAH SOME WATER (WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN PRECIOUS IN A SENSE) BUT SHE HESITATES WHEN HE ASKS FOR MORE THAN THAT (BREAD). HER RESPONSE INDICATES HOW BAD THINGS HAD GOTTEN FOR HER. SHE IS A WIDOW, WITH ONE SON, TRYING TO SURVIVE A SEVERE DROUGHT.



1 KINGS 17:12 (NLT) - BUT SHE SAID, "I SWEAR BY THE LORD YOUR GOD THAT I DON'T HAVE A SINGLE PIECE OF BREAD IN THE HOUSE. AND I HAVE ONLY A HANDFUL OF FLOUR LEFT IN THE JAR AND A LITTLE COOKING OIL IN THE BOTTOM OF THE JUG. I WAS JUST GATHERING A FEW STICKS TO COOK THIS LAST MEAL, AND THEN MY SON AND I WILL DIE."

1 KINGS 17:13-16 - ELIJAH'S REQUEST & GOD'S PROVISION

WHAT A STEP OF FAITH FOR THIS WOMAN TO TAKE! PERHAPS SHE WAS WILLING TO TRUST ELIJAH'S WORD BECAUSE SHE HAS REACHED A POINT OF DESPERATION. SOMETIMES IT IS IN THOSE MOMENTS THAT PEOPLE WHO WOULD NOT NORMALLY CONSIDER OBEYING THE WORD OF THE LORD DO SO AS THEIR LAST CHANCE. WHILE THIS IS NOT IDEAL, GOD IS GRACIOUS TO RESPOND TO OUR DESPERATE AND FINAL TURNING TOWARDS HIM. HE HOPES THAT THESE "MIDNIGHT CRIES" ARE NOT THE FINAL TIME HE HAS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CREATION.

1 KINGS 17:17-24 - WIDOW'S SON REVIVED

V. 18 - THE WOMAN BLAMES GOD & ELIJAH FOR HER SON'S DEATH. RATHER THAN SEEKING ELIJAH'S HELP, IT APPEARS SHE HAS AN EXPECTATION THAT EITHER HER SON SHOULD NOT HAVE DIED BECAUSE OF ELIJAH'S PRESENCE WITH HER IN HER HOME OR SHE THINKS THAT THE DEATH OF HER SON IS SOME SORT OF CONSEQUENCE AND PUNISHMENT FOR HER SIN.

WHAT WAS THE REAL REASON THAT THE WOMAN'S SON DIED? HE GOT SICK AND HIS SICKNESS AFFLICTED HIM UNTIL HE DIED. HIS DEATH ALSO WILL RESULT IN A GOD-GLORIFYING MIRACLE THAT CAUSED THE WOMAN TO CONFESS THAT THE WORD OF GOD (THROUGH ELIJAH WAS TRUE) AND THE LORD WAS THE TRUE GOD. I AM SURE SHE WOULD HAVE RATHER NOT GONE THROUGH THE TRIAL, BUT THE TRIAL LED HER TO THE LORD.

NOTICE THE DIFFERENT ATTITUDE OF ELIJAH HAS HE SEEKS THE LORD ON BEHALF OF THE WIDOW'S SON.

V. 20 - "O LORD MY GOD, HAVE YOU ALSO BROUGHT CALAMITY TO THE WIDOW WITH WHOM I AM STAYING, BY CAUSING HER SON TO DIE?"

ELIJAH INQUIRES ABOUT WHAT IS GOING ON AND SEEK THE LORD'S INVOLVEMENT AND ALSO ENLIGHTENMENT. HE DOES NOT BLAME GOD, BUT SEEKS GOD FOR HELP AND ANSWERS. THIS IS A GOOD POSTURE FOR US TO TAKE WHEN TROUBLING OR TRAGIC THINGS OCCUR IN OUR LIVES AND WORLD.

V. 21-22 - THE CHILD IS REVIVED! IN THE DARK TIME OF ISRAEL'S IDOLATRY AND THE DROUGHT OF DIVINE PUNISHMENT FOR THE NATION'S SIN - WE SEE THAT GOD IS STILL WORKING THROUGH THOSE WHO SEEK HIM. I BELIEVE THAT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN BIBLICAL HISTORY WHERE SOMEONE HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

WE END 1 KINGS 17 WITH SOME EXCITEMENT AND JOY BECAUSE, CONTRARY TO 1 KINGS 16, WE'VE GOT SOME GOOD NEWS FOR A CHANGE. ELIJAH IS HERE! MIRACLES ARE HAPPENING - FROM RAVENS AS WAITERS TO UNLIMITED BREAD TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE WIDOW'S SON! BUT LEST WE GET CAUGHT UP IN THE EXCITEMENT, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT AHAB IS KING IN ISRAEL AND JEZEBEL IS HIS QUEEN. BAAL IS THE LEADING GOD WORSHIPPED, NOT YAHWEH. AND IT HASN'T RAINED FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS.

GOD IS SHOWING HIMSELF THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF ELIJAH, BUT HE IS ALSO SHOWING HIMSELF THROUGH THE SILENCE OF HEAVEN - BOTH IN LACK OF RAIN AND LACK OF HIS WORD IN THE LAND. AND TO AHAB, BAAL HAS BEEN SILENT AS WELL - AFTER ALL, IN AHAB'S MIND YAHWEH IS NOT CHARGE OF THE ELEMENTS, BAAL IS. AND IT'S ALL COMING TO A HEAD. WE SEE A GREAT CONTRAST BETWEEN 1 KINGS 16 AND 17 AND AS WE TURN TO CHAPTER 18, AN EPIC BATTLE WILL ENSUE. AND A NEEDED ONE. WHO IN FACT IS THE TRUE GOD? WHOMEVER THE TRUE GOD IS, WHETHER BAAL OR THE LORD - IT IS TIME FOR ONE OF THEM TO SPEAK.