

# The Christian Arsenal

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## 1 KINGS 16:29-17:24

As we continue in our short study of the book of **1 Kings**, we keep seeing the kings God allowed Israel and Judah to have. Last week we were introduced to *Abijam* and *Asa* and *Baasha* and *Nadab* and *Zimri* and *Omri*. And none of these kings except **King Asa** of Judah were good kings.

Today, we're introduced to King Ahab...  
another wicked king...but not **just** another wicked  
king. We're going to see today, as well as the weeks  
ahead, just how wicked King Ahab really was.

### **1 Kings 16:29-34...**

Did you notice what the writer of **1 Kings** said in **verse 30**? It's bad to be evil...but it's **very bad** to be the **most** evil of all the ones who had gone before, isn't it?

Why do you believe Ahab was considered the most evil? Well, I believe in the time we have left in **1 Kings** we'll see why the Holy Spirit said this about Ahab. But, let me just give you my humble but accurate opinion!

Idolatry had always been in the land. It was there before the Israelites came in. And because of Solomon's many wives, he allowed idolatry to flourish. But, Baal worship and Asherah worship were not really considered "state religions" under Solomon.

Ahab married Jezebel...and as much as Solomon's 900 wives and concubines had turned his heart away from Jehovah...to an even greater extent, **Jezebel turned Ahab's heart to Baal and Asherah**. And she did this to the extent that idol worship was not only **allowed** by the state, but it was **encouraged** by the state, and it had become the "state religion."

**And this is the reason there were never any good kings in the kingdom of Israel. All the other kings followed in the footsteps of Ahab.**

I remember when President Clinton began placing lesbians and gays in his cabinet. And I couldn't help but think of Ahab and Jezebel. There really is nothing new under the sun, and homosexuality has **always** been in our nation. But, we had never ever had such a blatant and open display of this in our government before.

Abortion has been around a long, long time. But, it was President Clinton who showed a very strong disregard for the sanctity of life and even vetoed the ban on partial abortion.

**And we are going to see how King Ahab and his wife ran and ruined the Northern Kingdom to such an extent that they never recovered.**

**Chapter 17** introduces us to a very well-known prophet. And the interesting thing about this is that the Holy Spirit didn't choose to spend much time telling us about Elijah's background.

### **Verses 1...**

Elijah didn't take time to chat with Ahab about the weather.  
Elijah didn't have time for conversation with Ahab.  
Elijah didn't have time for social exchange with Ahab.

He simply said, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom

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I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

Don't you wonder what Ahab thought of Elijah? Don't you wonder if he said, "Who in the world was that?" Maybe what Elijah said didn't impress Ahab very much. Maybe he thought he was probably a religious fanatic who just wandered in out of the desert.

**By the way, God brought this drought not only as judgment against Israel's idolatry, but also to show that Baal, who was considered the god of fertility and lord of the rain clouds, would be powerless to give rain in the midst of a drought that Jehovah had ordained!**

It's much like when Moses went down to Egypt and God showed Himself mighty against the idols of Egypt. God was also showing Himself mighty against the idols of Israel.

## **Verses 2-6...**

God knew if Elijah stuck around Jezebel and Ahab would try to do him harm. Ahab was the king and Jezebel was the queen and they certainly didn't like anybody butting into their business.

Sometimes God's will is for us to stay where we are. And sometimes God's will is for us to go...and the will of God for Elijah in this instance was for him to **go and hide himself** by the brook Cherith.

Now, I don't believe for a minute that God couldn't defend Elijah against Ahab, do you?

I don't believe that God said, "Well, you know, if Elijah doesn't go hide himself, Ahab is liable to kill him and I can't do a thing about it."

No. I believe God knew that Elijah needed to get alone with Him. God has called His children to hide themselves in Him.

***"He hideth my soul in the cleft of the Rock that shadows a dry thirsty land.  
He hideth my life in the depths of His love and covers me there with His hand..."***

And God's will was for Elijah to go to the brook Cherith and depend on Him for his sustenance. And Elijah would drink from the brook. Now, there's nothing very unusual about drinking from a brook, is there? There's not much that tastes better than drinking from a clean, cool, running brook when you're hot and tired.

But, that's not all...

God sent Elijah ravens day and night. Ravens brought Elijah breakfast and ravens brought Elijah dinner. Ravens brought Elijah bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening.

Now, I've drunk from several brooks in my lifetime, but I've never had a raven bring me breakfast and dinner.

The Lord's faithful servant was miraculously sustained in the desert while Israel in the Promised Land...the land flowing with milk and honey...were going hungry.

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Where was Baal? Why didn't **he** sustain them?

Elijah didn't lack a thing! I love to read the signs on churches...especially the ones on little country churches as we go to our cabin. One sign I read this past week said "*God's provision is ample.*"

**Yes, God's provision is ample. It is ample...it is abundant...it is plentiful...it is exceeding...it is more than we can ever ask or think!**

And, you know...sometimes God's provision comes in ordinary ways...and sometimes God's provision comes in extraordinary ways.

Sometimes God just puts folks in our lives who can provide for our needs.

And I don't mean just **material needs**. I mean, sometimes we need a special word of **encouragement** or a special word of **advice** or **counsel** or even a special word of **admonition**...and God sends His raven to us to provide those special words. Has that ever happened to you?

But, I've come to understand something...Sometimes God lets us **receive** from His ravens and sometimes He lets us **be** His ravens.

Sometimes He tells us of someone who needs some assistance. Sometimes it's material assistance. But, sometimes He allows us to be the one who gives the good word of encouragement or advice or counsel.

## **Verse 7...**

What had Elijah said to Ahab? He had told Ahab that there would be no dew or rain except by his word. Now, this wasn't something he just dreamed up by himself, was it? I mean, **God told him to say it! This was God's idea!**

But, now the **brook he was drinking from dried up!**

And I want to tell you that sometimes our brook dries up as well. Why? What does it mean when the brook runs dry in your life?

Well, sometimes the brook runs dry because of **sin in your life**. This isn't the case with Elijah here. Elijah was exactly where God had told him to be.

Sometimes the brook runs dry **to remind us of the source of our blessing**. Was Elijah trusting in that brook, or was he trusting in the **God** of the brook?

Sometimes God lets the brook run dry **to deepen our faith**. Regardless of what Jan and Paul Crouch and Benny Hinn and Kenneth Copeland and the rest of those folks say...God isn't just a heavenly Santa Claus who is always there to meet our every whim.

**That's not faith. Sometimes God will let the brook run dry in our life so we can learn that we really can trust Him!**

And sometimes the brook runs dry because God **is getting ready to move us to a new place**. And this is what we see happening with Elijah.

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## Verses 8-16...

Back up in **verse 3**, God had told Elijah to go to the brook Cherith and He would provide for him **there**. Here in these verses God told Elijah to go to Zarephath and He would provide for him **there**.

I want to ask you this morning, "Are you **there**?" And I don't mean, "Are you at the brook Cherith, or are you down in Zarephath?" I want to ask you, "Are you **there**?"

If I were to say this morning, "How many of you are all here?" probably we would all raise our hands, but we might not be so sure about the one sitting next to us...I mean, you might say, "*I'm not so sure **she** is all here.*"

But, I'm not really concerned about the "here." I want to ask you. "Are you **there**?" God said to Elijah, "I want you to go to the brook Cherith. I have comanded the ravens to feed you **there**." Later on God said, "I want you to go to Zarephath and dwell **there**." **THERE**.

It's interesting that God never did tell Elijah just to wander around. That's the way lots of Christians live today. Lots of Christians just wander around. God never said to Elijah, "Elijah, just go wander around." No. God said, "Go **there**." And then God said, "Go **there**."

Sometimes the "there" changes. Elijah was in God's **there** when he was the brook Cherith. But the brook ran dry, and God said, "Now, I want you to go to Zarephath," and he was still in God's **there**.

God could have sent Elijah anywhere...but He sent him **there** to the widow in Zarephath. Jesus Himself said in **Luke** that there were many widows in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut up for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land...yet Elijah wasn't sent to any of them.

He was sent to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And the point that Jesus was making was that this widow was a Gentile and God loved her and sent His prophet to her to save her life and the life of her son. Zarephath was God's **there** for Elijah!

Let me tell you why it's so important to be **there**. You have to understand that being **there** is the biblical say of saying, "***You are in the will of God for a particular time in life.***"

1) Being **there** is the place of **God's purpose**.

Have you ever heard that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life? God's plan for you and me simply means that God has **a place for us to go and something for us to do**. God has a plan and a purpose for every one of us. That's what being "**there**" means.

2) Being **there** is the place of **God's power**.

In the verses we've read this morning, there are three different miracles.

a. The feeding of Elijah by the ravens. We've already talked about this being something **supernatural**.

b. The drought had affected this little woman's supply of groceries. All she had left was just a handful of flour and she was going to make a little bread with this and divide it with her son and then they would sit there probably holding hands starving until they died.

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But, God said, "Oh, she'll have enough flour. Her supply won't be exhausted...until I send rain upon the earth."

c. The little jar of oil...just barely enough left to mix up with that little bit of flour to make that little bit of bread. And God said, "Tell her there will be oil in that jar...until I send rain upon the earth."

3) Being **there** is the place of **God's provision**.  
Just think what Elijah received from God. He received a lot!

God provides for His own. The psalmist said, ***"I have been young and now I am old and I've never seen the righteous hungry nor his seed begging bread."***

Everybody else was thirsty. Elijah had water.  
Everybody else was hungry. Elijah had food...even being flown in.  
Everybody else's flour barrel ran dry, but not Elijah's.  
Everybody ran out of oil, but not Elijah.

But, he wasn't the only one receiving the blessings of God's provisions, was he? No! The widow woman and her son were **also** receiving the blessing of God.

Did you know that God will bless others through you? God never intended for us just to get blessed! God intended for us to be blessed so that we can be a blessing to others.

**The flour and the oil wasn't being multiplied anywhere except at Zarephath. That's where the place of provision was.**

Now some folks read this passage of Scripture and get a little perturbed. Some of **you** did. Some of you got put out with Elijah. I mean, doesn't it look like he just might be taking advantage of this widow woman?

"Go get me a little water in a jug..." and as she was going to get it, he said, "By the way, bring me some bread, too."

What was Elijah doing? He was testing her faith. Faith that is never tested is faith that isn't real.

I mean, anyone can shout and praise God when everything is going right...health is good, bills are paid, money is in the bank, food is on the table...but when everything goes wrong, and we can still obey God and praise His name...that's real faith!

Anybody can stand and testify when you've been healed. But, what if healing doesn't come?

Anybody can stand and testify when the bills are paid. But, what if they're not paid?  
Anybody can stand and testify when there's money in the bank. But, what if all of it is lost?

Anybody can stand and testify when the children are living for the Lord. But, what if they're not?

Elijah wasn't taking advantage of and being rude to this widow, he was testing her. **Would she believe God?** Because you see, Elijah didn't have any power. His power came from God.

Elijah said, "Lady, I want to tell you, God has said that if you'll do what I've asked you to do...if you'll get

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me some water and if you'll bring me some bread...  
God says there will be enough...there will be enough."

And she did! And she did it by an act of faith. Israel had forsaken the covenant. Israel had followed after false idols. And here is this little widow living in a pagan land and she came to know that obedience to the word of God is the only way that leads to life.

Elijah was **there** in the place of **God's purpose**.  
Elijah was **there** in the place of **God's power**.  
Elijah was **there** in the place of **God's provision**.

How do you and I get **there** from here? We get **there** by surrender. We get **there** by yielding. We get **there** by trusting. We get **there** by saying, "Not my will, but Thine be done, Lord."

Can you imagine with me how a conversation with Elijah might have gone?

"Elijah, where are you headed?  
"Over to the brook Cherith."

"What are you going over there for?"  
"God told me to go."

"What are you going to eat over there?"  
"Well, God said He's going to fly in meat and bread for me twice a day."

"Elijah, that's the silliest thing I ever heard in my life."  
"I know."

"Well, are you **going**?"  
"Oh yes, I'm going, because God told me to. I don't have to understand it...I just have to do it."

Don't you know folks would have called this widow and her son fools for giving their last bit of bread and water to a stranger?

But, you know...God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. And God has a lot more nice things to say about foolish folks than He does about really smart folks.

So, to get **there** from here sometimes folks will think we're really foolish, but that's okay.

Let's see the last part of this chapter and then we'll be through.

## **Verses 17-24...**

This is a familiar passage to all of us. I just want us to quickly see three points...

### **1) A Picture of Desperation...Verse 18...**

**She had shared all that she had with the man of God whom God had sent her way.**

Yet, **here we see that her son died.**

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See, a person can be a good person and still experience tragedy! God's children are not exempt from life's problems!

Don't we sometimes think, "If I do this and this for God,  
surely He will take care of me and my children...  
surely He won't allow me to suffer."

But, in reality, we know that's not true, don't we? Well, why **do** God's children suffer?

Sometimes suffering comes because of **righteousness** in our lives... Paul told Timothy that all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Sometimes it comes that the **glory of God** might be displayed in us... **John 9:1-3**. Remember when Jesus healed the blind man and His disciples came to Jesus and asked Him what caused this man's blindness...the sin of his parents or his own sin...what did Jesus say?

He said, ***"It wasn't either the sin of himself or his parents but that the works of God might be displayed in him."***

Sometimes our suffering comes just because of **natural events**. God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous and by the same token, when famines come and rain is withheld, both the evil and the good...both the righteous and the unrighteous suffer, don't they?

Sometimes our suffering comes **to test our faith**. Abraham was tested by God when he was told to offer up Isaac. And Abraham's faith stood up to that test, didn't it?

**Sometimes our suffering comes on us because of our own sin and I believe we see from this passage that this little widow thought this had happened because of some sin that she had committed.** However, this passage doesn't tell us it was her sin that caused this.

I believe, like Abraham, her suffering came to prove her faith!

We see that Elijah questioned God in all this. And that's the second thing I want us to see...

## **2) A Picture of Frustration...Verse 20...**

I don't believe Elijah was accusing God of doing evil. Elijah just simply couldn't figure God out. It's easy to figure God out when Elijah was ordered to go and rebuke Ahab, or when the ravens were feeding him, or when the flour and oil was multiplied...

But, when things like this happen...it's hard to figure God out, isn't it?

Sometimes God answers our "whys" and sometimes He doesn't and when He doesn't it's frustrating!

But, thank goodness, we're not left with just this picture of desperation and frustration...God also gives us from this passage...

## **3) A Picture of Consolation...**

God may allow you and me to suffer. We may lose our children. We may lose our health. We may lose our mate...but, He doesn't abandon us in the midst of our suffering. That's His promise to you and me, and **those of us who have suffered in any way can testify to this, can't we?**

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In this case, Elijah was sent by God to pray for the widow's son and to stretch himself out on him and as a result of his doing this, the boy revived.

I want us to notice that his life didn't return to him after the **first time** Elijah prayed...nor after the **second time**.

**Real praying is persistent praying. James tells us "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much."**

Sometimes we have to go before the Lord many times before  
He answers our prayers.

One more thing...This was not a resurrection...it was a resuscitation. One day, this young boy died again. The only One who has ever been resurrected never to die again is the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Verse 24** tells us that the widow said, "Now I **know** that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

Wouldn't you think she would have already known this just from the oil and flour being provided? Maybe she **did** know in the beginning...but then when her son died all her faith disappeared.

Maybe she had misplaced her faith. Maybe all her faith was in Elijah.  
Maybe she thought Elijah was just magically multiplying all this flour and oil.

I believe God wanted to strengthen her faith. I believe God wanted her to know a deeper faith...a faith not based in a man, but in God!

**And I believe He wants the same for you and me today...**

Our faith doesn't have to be big. Our faith just has to be placed in the right object. The object of our faith must be the Lord...not man. Because when you get down to it, only God can make a difference.

**Romans 4:17** tells us that it is **God** who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they are...

Well, today we've been introduced to two men...two men so very different from each other. One man knew **of** God. One man was known **by** God.

We have seen King Ahab and the fact that he did more to provoke the Lord than all the kings of Israel who were before him. We've seen that he and his wife brought idol worship to a new level in Israel. And in the few weeks we have remaining to study this book, we'll see the consequences of this.

But, we've also been introduced to a wonderful old prophet of God...Elijah. And in the weeks ahead we'll see how this mighty old prophet was used by the Lord in prophesying against Ahab and Jezebel.