

1 Kings Ch 17:1-7

We find here in Ch 17 that like a flash of lightning across the night sky Elijah comes storming onto the scene to deal with the Kingdom of Israel in one of its bleakest most blackened moments of history. I read somewhere where one man said, “The times were fit for Elijah, and Elijah for the times. The greatest prophet reserved for the worst age.” and We don’t really get any background information on him, he just mysteriously bursts onto the scene right at this crucially low time whereby it seems all hope for the nation is about to be lost. Generation after generation of kings going from bad to worse, conspiracy and murder, the sanctioning idolatry and forsaking of the Lord. And when Ahab ascended to the throne he took Israel to rock bottom, we read in vs 31-33 of ch 16 (read).

They’ve all but eliminated the worship of Yahweh, they’ve broken down His altars, have slain all of His prophets that they have been able to find, and inserted in His place the worship of Baal.

And then seemingly out of nowhere comes this man of God, “Elijah the Tishbite” and as unto the Lord he begins to rock their world. The Pulpit Commentary said, “His first entry within the province of the history seems almost as unique and inexplicable as his final disappearance. Elijah comes in with a tempest, and goes out with a whirlwind.” No doubt he serves as one of the more interesting characters that surface throughout the pages of scripture, and according to the scripture God isn’t finished with him yet. We read in the book of Malachi, “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*” Mal 4:5 Which is to say that before Jesus returns to the earth Elijah will come back on the scene to minister to the nation of Israel and testify to the reality of gospel of Jesus Christ You say, “I thought that man was appointed once to die and then the judgment?” You’d be correct, but Elijah (technically) never died, in 2nd Kings ch 2 vs 11 we read that Elijah was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire as by a whirlwind. Now I’m certain that his flesh and blood didn’t inherit the kingdom of God, but as for dying in a manner that accords with what we would reckon to be death, it never happened with him. That’s why even during Jesus’ time the people were looking for Elijah to be on the scene. You remember when J.B. was out in the desert preaching away, and from the way the bible describes Elijah he fit the stereotype, hairy man, big leather belt around his waist, preaching repentance and all, but when they asked him if he was Elijah he said, “No.” Now you remember when the Lord went up on the MT and was transfigured before Peter, James, and John. And there they saw Him talking with Moses and Elijah about the cross that was soon to come, now of course that served as an opportunity for Peter to stick his foot in his mouth that he was sure not to waste. But after that whole deal it obviously prompted them to talk about it with the Lord, and they said, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah has to come 1st?” and We read that, “*Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.*” Matt 17:11-13 So John said that he wasn’t Elijah yet Jesus said that in essence he was, what’s the deal?

You remember that when Zacharias, John's dad was in the temple ministering before the Lord on the behalf of the people that an angel appeared to him. And He told him that he would have a son that he was to name John. And He said, "...*he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*" Luke 1:16-17 In other words he was coming into the nation at a time of stress and trouble, and he would be used of God to turn multitudes back to the Lord even as Elijah did in his day.

And the bible prophesied that he would come before the Lord, and so Jesus was saying that he fulfilled the type, in coming in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare people for His 1st coming. But Elijah will literally come before His 2nd coming, that's why nearly every bible scholar with out exception agrees on the fact that of the 2 witnesses in Rev 11 that Elijah is most certainly one of them. So he's a very significant and interesting character in his role in the scriptures as a prophet, and this is where he's introduced 1st here in 1st Kings Ch 17.

Vs 1

Now as I said all we really know about Elijah historically is that he's a Tishbite of the region of Gilead. You say, "What's a Tishbite?" I don't know, there's some speculation as to whether or not Elijah was even an Israelite, though it's likely that he was, there's no way to really prove that biblically or historically, because we don't have any real background information on him. But his message is representative of his name, his name means, "Jehovah, (Or Yahweh) is my God," or you could reverse it, "My God is Jehovah." and He steps in before Ahab on behalf of the Lord to let him know that Israel's God is Jehovah *not* Baal. And the word, "As" in his declaration was added for clarification, but it's not there, he just says, "The Lord God of Israel lives." They'd been trying to stamp out the reality of the one true Living God and replace Him with pieces of wood, statues of gold which were nothing more than the work of men's hands. And Elijah says, "The Lord God of *Israel* lives (as opposed to Baal) before whom I stand (meaning 'whose I am, and whom I serve') there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at *my word*." Now you need to understand that Baal was a fertility god, meaning not only physically were there perverse worship rites, but as for the productivity of the earth, they counted on him for that as well. Meaning they prayed to him for rain to give them a fruitful harvest. And those last 2 words, "My word" are somewhat emphatic, which no doubt alludes to the fact that it doesn't matter what the prophets of *Baal* have to say, or how they might pray, it's not going to rain until I (the prophet of the true God) say so. And he turns around and walks out, now where did he get this audacity? How did he know that the Lord would do this? #1 He knew the Word of God. God had told them in His Word, "*Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.*" Deut 11:16-17 God had told them very specifically that drought and famine would be a direct discipline in the nation as the result of turning from Him to idolatry.

Elijah knew that, so he acted upon that, he trusted God for His Word, but we also know that he knew about the power of prayer. He didn't just storm in her presumptuously and represent the Lord with out 1st hearing from the Lord, James tells us, "*The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.*" James 5:16-17 So he studied God's Word, sought Him diligently in prayer, and God used him powerfully. And no doubt this drought typified Israel's spiritual condition, dry, the living waters of the Holy Spirit were no longer flowing nationally.

Now I have no doubt that this left Ahab stunned, you don't walk in before the King with a message of condemnation, offer no apologies, get up in his face (proverbially speaking) denounce everything he stands for, and then just walk out and head back to work. Elijah wasn't looking to get ahead in this, if anything he thought he'd lose his head, people were put to death for less, he didn't know he was leaping into the pages of scripture to be studied for centuries upon centuries, there was no personal agenda here. The Lord gave him an objective and he faithfully followed through, what's the objective God has laid before you? Concerning your marriage, your family, your commitments perhaps at work or in the fellowship or whatever, are you following through? How important to be faithful with that which God entrusts to us.

Because with each directive God gives us, He's nurturing us that we might *grow* in faith, that we might *go forth* in faith. The bible says, "*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'*" Rom 1:17 As we just kind of read through this we think, man Elijah was used radically, and he was. But he was just like you and me; he didn't start out being of such high caliber spiritually speaking. Nor is he there yet, this whole series of events that take place in his life are fashioned in such a way as to exercise his faith. I'm sure you've heard the old cliché of faith is like a muscle, if it's to be built up it needs to be stretched, worked out, flexed, pressed on, and taken to it's limit with regularity. If it's neglected it just gets weaker, but if it's placed in an environment that's taking it to it's limits, it grows stronger. And God wants to use Elijah's life in radical ways, but in that he's going to have to learn some valuable lessons. So Elijah follows through on his 1st objective, and we read in vs 2.

Vs2-6

Now there are a few things that we want to get around to seeing here as it pertains to our being used by God and built up in faith. Here was Elijah, out in the forefront, pumped, poised, and primed for action, moving in authority, in a position of high visibility so as to be heard as the voice of the Lord to Ahab personally, and Israel nationally. He's no doubt prepared himself for the big showdown and now out of nowhere God puts him on the sidelines, in a place of obscurity and invisibility. What's going on? A few things, God is nurturing this mans faith, and as I said He's going to use him in amazing ways, but God has this way of building us up, then breaking us down, that He might build us up again stronger, more stable.

Sometimes we call it the pruning process, whereby He's trimming us back that we might bear more fruit, now I'm getting the cart just a bit before the horse because we'll see that God nurtures our faith by giving us His Word, which reveals to us His will, by which we learn His ways, but all the while God is leading him that way where is He taking him? To Cherith, which interestingly enough means "cutting," God gives Elijah His Word, that leads him in His will, and teaches him His ways at the "cutting" place. Where God carves on him, cuts him back that He might increase His work in Elijah's life.

Perhaps you've been directed by God's Word, you know you're in God's will, and God is showing you His ways, but you find yourself in a place right now where there's some serious carving going on. And sometimes that can cause us to 2nd guess if we were truly directed by God's Word, or we're in God's will, are these truly God's ways? Elijah could give you an Emphatic "Yes" there are times that God's Word will lead you by His will to Cherith, and He begins to show you His ways at the place where you're being cut on, trimmed back, stretched, flexed, worked out and worked over. But it's because He's got a further work for your life and if you're to bear more fruit, you need to be cut back.

Notice in vs 2 that as Elijah was faithful to follow through with his objective that the *word of the Lord came to him*. And this is one of the ways God nurtures our faith, via His Word. Now how did the Word of God come to him? We don't know, perhaps a vision, could've been a dream, or an impression upon his heart, and God can speak to us in any of those ways, but as you know primarily God will speak to us in His written Word which becomes the scale that balances all of those other methods, it's the authority in any given situation that we're seeking to discern. But God uses His Word to build your faith. As we've read recently the bible says, "*...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" Peter said that we're to, "*...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.*" 1 Peter 2:2

God uses His *Word* to nurture and grow you in faith. And He reveals His *will* to nurture your faith as well. (Vs3) What was God's will for Elijah? (Read)

God told him very specifically, and quite clearly that it was His will for Elijah to go and hide in a specific spot, by a specific brook. How does God reveal His will to us? Sometimes He closes every door we push on and leaves only one direction for us to take, other times He might place a clear cut scriptural conviction on your heart that there's no mistaking, perhaps you'll be in a situation and His peace will just evaporate from your heart and that will cause you to step back and re-evaluate the situation and move in the right direction. But again primarily just as with Elijah here He gives us His will by His Word. Because 99% of our life's choices can find direction either in the positive or the negative in the Word of God, there are no small # of things that the bible just says, "Do this or that, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." But even in other areas, as husbands it may not say specifically that you're to work at Wal-Mart, but God wants you to provide for your family, He tells us in His Word. So you don't need to wonder if God would have you get a job, the answer is yes.

And we could list a small plethora of examples but I think you get the point; God gives us His will by His Word. But as He reveals His will, it nurtures your faith.

God teaches you His *ways* to nurture your faith as well, notice vs 4 (read). To me this would seem pretty trippy. It's unconventional to say the least, if God were to ask me how He should provide for my needs, I don't know that I would've said, "How about I drink from a creek and You have birds bomb my head with bread?" But we notice in this vs something about God's *ways* and that is, so often God wants to work with us, not only does He go *before* us, and prepare the way *for* us, but He wants to partner with us in His work. He says, "You drink from the creek, that's what you can do, and what you can't do, I'll take care of, I'll supply your sustenance." You know I can give out the gospel, but only God can change a persons life, I can drink in the Water of the Word of God, but it's the Lord who feeds me. But God loves to blow our minds, His ways are not our ways. Job said, "*He does great things past finding out, Yes, wonders without number.*" Job 9:10 Again the bible says, "*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*" Rom 11:33 You just can't box God in, and if we could just grasp that the question of "Why" would be virtually eliminated from our vocabulary. Because we don't have to know why, we're contented to know "Who." So many times we want to know why God did this, or how He allowed that? We don't always know *why*, but we know *who* is in control of all things and in that God help us to be content. God blows our minds with His ways, but He uses them build up our faith. He is able to meet our needs and take care of our situations in ways that we've never even thought of, and God gave Elijah His Word, revealed His will, showed him His ways, and in vs 5 Elijah obeyed even though it was going to be at a place of "cutting" for him.

Vs5-6

Each day, day by day, God provided for Elijah's needs, we might say that He gave him each day his daily bread. He looked *to* God, and depended *upon* God to provide for Him every day that which he would need to sustain him, give him life, nourish his being. How about you? Are we feeding upon the bread of the Word of God every day? Getting what we need each day, for that day to sustain life, we need to feed on God's Word every day, or our inner man will just waste away. God was teaching Him to look *to* Him, depend *upon* Him every day of his life. Remember God wants to use his life, but these are lessons he needs to learn, that we need to learn if God's to use our lives, to look to Him depend on Him, every day.

Now the word "bread" here in vs 6 is just a general term for food, it could've been berries or eggs or whatever.

But there's one more "W" that God teaches us through that we can glean from these vs, perhaps you caught it in vs 5 where it says that he went and "stayed" by the brook. What's the word? These 1st 3 things are God's part, what He does to increase and build up our faith. Give us His Word, reveal His will, teach us and show us His ways, but what's our response? We're to "wait" patiently as God nurtures us in His ways, through His will, by His Word, Elijah stayed

right there. We talked about faith being like a muscle, you might consider this “wait-training” that Elijah is taking part in. And in no way is the *wait* training easy, how many of us will take a longer route if we just don’t have to wait on the train? But the scriptures encourage us to *wait* upon the Lord. “*Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.*” Ps 25:5 Ps 27:14 “*Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!*” Isaiah tells us, “... *the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.*” Isa 30:18 God’s *Word* can never fail in its nurture, nor does His *will*, nor His *ways*, but so often we fail in the *wait*. Yet Isaiah tells us that, “...*those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.*” Isa 40:31 Even when it seems that things seem to be drying up and dying off, wait for the Lord, He’ll tell you when to move, notice vs 7.

Vs7

What’s Elijah doing? Waiting, he hasn’t heard from the Lord so he remains right where he’s at, but God’s growing him in his faith, preparing him to go forth in faith, which we’ll see next time. But He’s even using his present circumstance to teach him and prepare him for the plan He has for his life. Because Elijah’s watching that stream get lower and lower everyday, and he’s learning that apart from another source feeding that stream it just becomes a dried up earthen channel, through which water could flow, could give life, but since there’s no other source feeding it, it becomes of no value.

God’s going to use Elijah’s life in a major way, but he has to know he’s nothing more than an earthen channel through which water *can* flow as long as it’s fed from the Living Waters of another source. Other than that he’ll dry up, it’s not him, it’s not you, it’s not me, we’re just dried out creek beds until the Living Waters of Jesus Christ rains *into* us, and begins to flow out *through* us. God nurtured him right where he was at until that creek ran dry, till he could learn the worthlessness of a drying out, stagnating pool of water that eventually ran dry altogether. And God will continue to nurture us right where we’re at, help us to grow in faith through His Word, showing us His will, teaching us His ways while we wait upon Him to move us forward in faith. Meanwhile God help us to get to that point of realizing our utter dependence upon Him for daily bread, for Living water, understanding that we’re nothing more than an earthen channel through which He can flow, but it’s all about Him, He wants to use you in awesome ways, but it has to be Him in You, flowing through you, apart from Him we can do nothing, but with Him there’s nothing we can’t do.

So Elijah comes onto the scene like a flood, and now the land is drying up, next time we’ll continue to see how God uses his life in incredible ways.

