

Elijah and the Widow

^ Sermon Sunday 5 May 2019 - Revd BS Fiddler -
1 Kings 17:7-24 and Luke 4:24-27

Introduction

Series on Elijah and Elisha

Prophets who operated in Israel between King David and the Exile

Series will run through the end of July

Interrupted by Ascension and Pentecost

1&2 Kings

One book originally

split in Gk versions of the bible

To be made more 'manageable'?

Ch/Vs were introduced in medieval period

History of Israel from the time of King David - the Exile to Babylon

King Salomon - The Kingdom of Peace

^ 1 Ki 1-11

Divided Kingdom

^ 1 Ki 11 - 2 Ki 17

The Kings and History of

Remaining Kingdom: Promise and Punishment

^ 2 Ki 18-25

The Kings and History of Judah the remainder

Setting the scene

Ahab - King of Judah

^ 1 Ki 16:29-34

There is a new King in Samaria: Ahab

He did more evil in the eyes of Lord than any before him

Jezebel the queen from Sidon

Not from Israel but from a country Sidon - who did not worship God but Baal

The dead Baal opposed to the living God

Ahab and Jezebel created and alter and temple to Baal

Rain and Ravens

^ 1 Ki 17:1-6

Elijah is introduced: As the Lord, the God of Israel lives: there will be no rain for next few years

Tishbite for Tisbe in Gilead

God tells him to go to the Kerith Ravine where he is fed bread and meet by the ravens, as God promised (#Miracle 1)

Elijah fed by Sidonian Widow

Once the water of the brook runs dry, God tells Elijah to go to the Widow of Zarepheth of Sidon

To Sidon in current day Lebanon

north of Tyre

south of current day Beirut-

> 150 miles from Kerith

Meets with the Widow and her son

Who does not have food and is ready to die

But God provides for all three with another miracle: an abundant supply of flour and jar out of single jar and a single jug (#Miracle 2)

Resurrection of dead boy

Then her son falls ill and dies

The widow blames Elijah and sees his coming as a punishment for her sins

Even though she was ready to die with her son before Elijah came

And Elijah prays over the body of the son and pleads with God to let life return to him

And God hears Elijah's cry (#Miracle 3)

And the widow identifies that truly Elijah is a Man of God

Return to Israel

Observations

Life vs Death

Judah is dying under the draught - as they turned away from the living God

The boy dies because of sin - and becomes alive due to God's word 1Ki17:24

The Sidonian Widow believes in a dead idol, and restored by the Living God

The God of Elijah is the God who gives Live

Elijah foreshadows the Messiah cf with resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain (Lk 7:11-17)

God is not restricted by borders

Judah rejects God

God orders draught and sends Elijah away

The draught does not only hurt Judah

But also the surrounding areas like Sidon - Lebanon

So presumably Israel - the North - as well

To Sidon via Israel and Tyre - >150 miles from Kerith Ravine where the Elijah was fed by ravens

While death came to Israel from Sidon in the form Jezebel and Baal

Life comes to Sidon through Elijah and God

God is not restricted by class or status

The saviour of Elijah is widow

Widow, poor and outcast

No money

No food

Downcast and depressed

Ready to die after final meal

The saviour of the widow is an unlikely Prophet

Foreigner from Israel

Presenting a foreign God - She worships Baal presumably

And this God can work miracles?

But she has no other option than to risk it

Two people from different backgrounds, nations, faiths, and class help each other as directed by God

God often saves others as we are being saved!

The widow and her son live - and would have died otherwise

And Elijah learns to trust God more and is firmly established as Prophet

Both learn to trust God more

The Saved

As well as the one who acts to Save

God's Word directs and leads

Elijah obeys Gods Word to him:

Elijah to Ahab: It will not rain (1 Ki 17:1)

Word of Knowledge?

God to Elijah: Go to Kerith and the brook and the ravens will feed you

God to Elijah: Go to the widow of Zarephath of Sidon (1Ki17:8)

God to Widow: I have commanded the widow to provide you with food (1Ki 17: 8-9)

Elijah to Widow: The oil and flour will not be consumed (1 Ki 17: 14)

Gift of Prophecy?

The resurrection of the son

Did Elijah instruct God through his prayers?

Or did God direct Elijah to pray in this way?

Widow: Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the **word of the Lord** in your mouth is truth

She perceived God's words through the actions of Elijah

The Widow believed

That Elijah was a man of God

And also that God was real

She moved from obeying the Man of God

To challenging this "God of yours" when her boy was dead

To accepting that Elijah speaks the Word of the Lord

And that Word of the Lord is true

And therefore that God is the only true God!

Jesus: No prophet is accepted in his home town

Jesus at the beginning of his ministry comes home to Nazareth

And although they are proud and curious

Seemingly not put out by the bold statement that Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah has been fulfilled

He sees through them

They require the same miracles that they have heard about

But do not accept him as Messiah

And Jesus refers to Elijah and the Widow

Why did God not sent Elijah not go to the Israelites Widows?

and ensured that Israelite widows were fed?

Or that an Israelite son was brought back to life?

This is not what they wanted to hear!

They had a right to be healed and restored!

They were the people of God!

And they wanted to kill him for this

For telling the truth?

Speaking to them what they do not want to hear?

Not being politically correct?

Shattering their illusion that they had rights as the people of God?

So what is Jesus telling us today?

The people of Israel hold on to Baal even when death was threatening them

Who is our Baal?

What are our their securities that we hold on to?

Are we truly worshipping God and have him at the centre of our lives?

God directs the Mission

Not only with theology and doctrine

But with clear directions

Go to this ravine

Go to Sidon

When God leads people come to faith

Like the Widow of Sidon

And also leads, equips and grows those who help others to faith

The people of Nazareth were secure in the rights that their faith gave them

But Jesus comes and turns that around

I am not here for you, I am here for the people who have not had a chance to get to know me

Jesus does not come for us - we already know him

He comes for the ones who do not yet know him

And he is asking us to help

Are we willing to obey God even if it means to go to away from our home, our church or whatever our security is?

Someone left a note on the table at the AGM last week

I don't know who wrote it

It said: "Our greatest challenge and our only mission is to make the Gospel clear to those who are lost."

Or as Jesus said it: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

^ Mat 28:19-20

"And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age"

^ Mat 29:21

Are we ready to listen to what God is asking us to do?

Maybe that is it for now: to be ready: to be prepared

Let's prepare ourselves