

### God Provides for Elijah

#### 1 Kings 17:2-7

1 Kings 17:2-7 - *“Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.”*

*So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.”*

#### Background Notes

1 Kings 17:2-7 is the record of how the Lord hid the prophet Elijah after his confrontation with Ahab, and how He miraculously provided for His servant during this time.

In verse 1 we saw Elijah's sudden appearance! Just as his appearance in Scripture was sudden, so his appearance before wicked King Ahab was sudden and dramatic. Elijah burst on the palace scene unannounced, and confronted King Ahab. His message was short and to the point: *“As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.”*

As soon as Elijah delivered God's message to King Ahab, he disappeared! Ahab and Jezebel had no idea who he was or where he was. 1 Kings 18:10 says that Ahab and Jezebel ordered an international search for Elijah, but they could not find him. God had directed His servant Elijah away from the capital city of Samaria and into hiding.

Elijah would be out of circulation in Israel for three years. Time was needed for God's message to sink in. There was no rain for 3 ½ years, so a severe famine would develop in the land. God wanted to soften Ahab up, and prepared him for his next encounter with Elijah.

God directed Elijah to travel east from Samaria and hide by Cherith, a brook that flowed into the Jordan River. Most likely Cherith was on the east side of the Jordan River. Maybe it was not far from Elijah's home territory in Gilead, which was on the east side of the Jordan River. That area is mountainous and a good place for hiding. In fact, Elijah may have been familiar with all the best hiding places along Brook Cherith from his boyhood days!

The way God provided food for Elijah was most unique! Twice a day, ravens brought him bread and meat! The most amazing part of this miracle was the fact that the food was dropped off by **ravens!** Ravens are scavenger birds. Sometimes they don't even feed their young, let alone drop off meat and bread twice a day for a human prophet! So this was definitely a miracle!

According to Jewish law, ravens were unclean birds (Leviticus 11:15). So this likely wasn't a pleasant experience for Elijah, a Jewish prophet, to receive food from ravens. Nevertheless, this was the way God chose to feed His servant Elijah, and it was a lesson in trust for him.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God uses both supernatural and natural means to accomplish His purposes.

God's purpose was to provide for His servant Elijah. He used birds and a brook to do the job. The birds were supernatural means; the brook was natural means. For ravens, of all birds, to drop off bread and meat - twice a day, right on schedule - was quite unnatural. God was using supernatural means. It was a miracle! Obviously it was no problem for God, because God is in ultimate control of all His creatures, including ravens.

The brook, on the other hand, was a natural way of caring for Elijah. God didn't have ravens drop off bottled water. He could have, but He chose to use natural means - a brook. God uses both supernatural and natural means to accomplish His purposes, then and today. Normally He uses natural means, but sometimes He'll use supernatural means.

Take healing, for example. All healing is of God. When God chooses to heal a person, normally He uses natural means. God has designed the human body with an immune system - the means to fight infection, and healing mechanisms so our bodies can heal naturally. Doctors, surgeons and medications are also natural means that help the body heal itself and get back to normal.

But occasionally God will step in and heal supernaturally. When I was twelve years old I had polio. I'd been paralyzed for days - but I believe God stepped in and supernaturally healed me. Overnight the paralysis left! I was back to normal. My doctors couldn't understand it. There was no healing service, no laying on of hands. There was a lot of prayer that I would be healed, and God chose to step in and heal me supernaturally. As far as I know, that's the only time in my life that God has used supernatural means to heal. Normally, for most of us, God uses natural means of healing.

This certainly applies to situations other than healing. In our lives, God uses both supernatural and natural means to accomplish His purposes.

## 2. Cherith must come before Carmel.

What's this doctrinal point all about anyway? Well, in chapter 18 we'll study the great confrontation between God's prophet, Elijah, and the prophets of Baal. A major victory is accomplished through Elijah - in the sight of all Israel!

But Cherith had to come before Carmel. Elijah had to be out of the limelight for a while, because God wanted a period of time to teach His servant some valuable lessons. Elijah needed to learn first hand about God's provision, protection, walking by faith, dependence on the Lord, and other lessons as well.

Throughout Scripture, we see that God used the "Cherith before Carmel" principle. Joseph, for example, had to serve a time in rejection and prison before God raised him to power and glory in Egypt. Moses had to spend 40 years in the land of Midian before God used him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. David had years of tending the family's sheep before God called him to be king over all of Israel. John the Baptist spent years in the wilderness before his great mission of announcing the Messiah. Paul went into Arabia for time alone with God before beginning his great missionary travels. Even our Lord Himself spent many years in obscurity, walking in infinite communion with His Father, before His three years of public ministry.

If God is going to use us publicly, we too can expect to spend preparation time at our "Cherith." Cherith must come before Carmel.

## Practical Applications

### 1. God may permit your brooks to dry up.

*"And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land" (v7).* The brook, remember, was the natural way God provided Elijah with water. But the natural source of supply dried up! God was dealing with the nation of Israel because they had turned away from Him, and no longer walked in the ways of the Lord. God had turned off the rain in answer to Elijah's prayer, and now the result was suffering. And the suffering not only affected Israel - it affected Elijah as well. His water supply was gone.

Sometimes when God is working out His plans and dealing with others, our personal lives may also be affected. For example, suppose that God were to allow hard times to come to our country because of our nation's sin. Of course our lives as Christians would be affected. We would experience hard times, along with everyone else. In fact, our natural means of supply - our brooks - might be affected. They might even dry up.

God had reasons for allowing Elijah's brook to dry up, even though Elijah didn't realize or understand those reasons. God was going to teach Elijah that He had other ways to meet his needs. God let the brook dry up because He wanted Elijah to move on to a different location.

God may permit our brooks to dry up for any number of reasons. Take your job, for example. Your job is a brook. It is the natural means that God uses to supply your needs. The money you earn at your job supplies your basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. Well, for reasons known only to Himself, God may permit your job to dry up.

Maybe you've lost your job. God permitted that brook to dry up for some reason, although you don't understand it now. Maybe God has permitted other brooks to dry up in your life. Family and friends, for example, are "brooks" - a natural means God uses to meet our emotional needs. But maybe you've lost a family member or a special friend. Why did God allow that to happen? We don't know all the reasons at this time, but as we can see, God had some specific reasons for Elijah's brook drying up.

It's true in our lives as well. God has His reasons for allowing our brooks to dry up.

## **2. What grades are you getting at "Cherith College"?**

We've already indicated that Elijah was taking some important courses while he was in the school of God, at "Cherith College." He had to take required courses in God's provision, courses in God's protection, courses in dependence on the Lord, courses in walking by faith. There was even a course in solitude – spending time alone with God. We all need to take these courses at Cherith College in the school of God.

The question is: how are we doing? What grades are we getting? Let's just look at one course as an example: "Humility 101." Elijah learned humility at Cherith College. He was the important prophet whom God had called to preach before the king! The nation was abuzz about this prophet who had stopped the rain! But God had Elijah step away from all that - out of the limelight. God had Elijah step away to learn humility.

What would we have done? What grade would we have gotten on that course? Would we have objected to stepping aside? "Wait a minute Lord! I should be out there preaching! What am I doing here, wasting my gifts and talents sitting by this brook?"

Has the Lord taken you to a quiet place, out of the spotlight? Perhaps God has called you to step aside from your usual service for Him because of an illness, or an injury, or because a family member needs care? If so, how are you doing in the course in humility?

1 Peter 5:6 says, "*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.*" What grades are we getting at Cherith College?