

Many years had passed since Jeroboam had encouraged idolatry by creating two golden calves for worship in the Kingdom of Israel. Several men had been king, each one as wicked, if not more so, than the one before him.

After the death of his father, Ahab became the king of Israel. Ahab did more evil than all the kings that were before him. Ahab married a foreign woman whose name was Jezebel. Jezebel brought her god Baal (*BAY-uhl*) to the land of Israel, and Ahab built an altar and a grove for Baal in Samaria.

Baal was the farm god and the storm god. He, supposedly, controlled the increase of the family, the field, the flocks, and the herds. His voice was supposed to be heard in the thunder of a storm when it rained—and rain was very important to the growth of the crops.

God had warned the Israelites against worshiping such gods (Deuteronomy 6:14-15), but Ahab and Jezebel encouraged the people of the land to worship Baal! Jezebel wanted the worship of the true God to completely stop.

During this time, God raised up a man named Elijah to be a powerful prophet. Elijah saw all the wickedness that King Ahab had brought on the land. Elijah went to the king and told him as sure as God was alive, "there shall not be dew nor rain these years" until he said so! (The length of time that it did not rain was three-and-a-half years; James 5:17.)

If Baal were truly in control of the storms and rain, Elijah's words would not have been anything for King Ahab to worry about. But only the true God of Heaven controls the weather.

God told Elijah to go and hide "by the brook Cherith [*KER-ith*]." God promised Elijah that He had commanded the ravens to feed him there. No doubt, this was in part to save Elijah's life, as Ahab and Jezebel were not pleased when the rain and dew stopped. Also, they could not command Elijah to end

Church of God Sunday School

GOD PROVIDES FOR ELIJAH

1 Kings 16:29 — 17:16

the drought if he could not be found!

In obedience, Elijah hid by the brook. There he had plenty of water to drink, and God commanded the ravens to bring Elijah bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening.

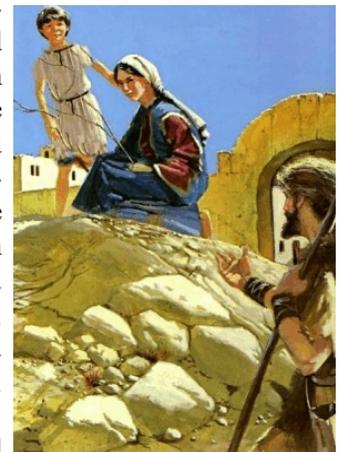
Ravens are like crows, only larger. Ravens are greedy too. But when God commanded those greedy birds to carry bread and meat to Elijah, they did not eat any of the food! They carried it straight to Elijah, morning and evening!

In time, the brook dried up. Then God told Elijah

to go to the city of Zarephath (*ZAIR-uh-fath*). God had commanded a certain widow woman to take care of Elijah. Elijah obeyed God and went to Zarephath. At the gate of the city, Elijah saw a woman gathering sticks, to make a fire. Elijah said to her, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."

As the woman turned to get the water, Elijah said he wanted a little bread too. Water she still had, but her meal and oil to make bread were about gone. She said, ". . . I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse [bottle]: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it [prepare it] for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."

She might have been afraid to do as Elijah wanted because Elijah said to her: "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake [a small loaf of bread] first . . . and after make for thee and for thy



son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth."

The woman went inside the house to make the bread for Elijah. She might have wondered if there really would be enough meal and oil for her son and herself later—but she made the little loaf of bread for Elijah anyway. *She was pleasantly surprised when she went back to the meal barrel.* There really was enough meal to use for her and her son! The oil bottle was not empty either!

Every time they needed to eat, there was always enough meal in the barrel and oil in the bottle to supply food for all three: Elijah, the woman, and her son. The Bible says there was always meal in the

barrel and oil in the cruse until it rained again (thought to be about two years).

There were many widows in the land of Israel, but God knew exactly which one would take care of Elijah (Luke 4:25-26). Although she lived in a heathen city, she loved the true God, and God blessed her greatly.

Was Elijah being selfish when he asked the woman to fix him some food first? Elijah represented God and His will. God's people are to put God first in everything: their money, time, desires, and life plans. By feeding Elijah first, the widow was giving to God first and trusting Him to take care of the rest.

In the New Testament Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

~~~~~  
**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD."  
—1 Kings 17:16*  
~~~~~