

General Church Education



Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

1 Kings 17:1-24

Lesson 10

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 6: The Lord Is the Prophet and
Preserver

For ages 11-12 years

Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

1 Kings 17:1-24

Teacher Background

The prophet Elijah appears suddenly in the Word to announce that Israel will experience a drought as a punishment due to the evils of king Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Delivering this message from the Lord put Elijah's life in danger. So he hid near a brook and was fed by ravens. Following this, he went to Zarephath where a widow cared for him. In response, the Lord provided her with flour and oil until the drought ended. One day, the widow's son died, however with the Lord's power, Elijah took him to an upper room and restored him to life.

This story is an excellent opportunity to increase students' understanding of the spiritual sense of the Word. A drought stands for a lack of goodness in a person or group of people. The oil and flour that the Lord grants the widow both have to do with love. Oil stands for love to the Lord, and flour, to love of the neighbor. Together, they make bread—a food which corresponds to the good of love because it nurtures and provides sustenance.

Focus Points

- The prophet Elijah spoke on behalf of the Lord.
- The Lord gave Elijah extraordinary power to do miracles.
- The Lord granted Elijah the power to restore a boy from the dead.

Readings from the Writings

“It is recorded ... that Elijah was sent, when there was a famine because there was no rain in the land, to a widow in Zarephath. He asked her for a little cake, which she had to make for him first and give it to him; after that she was to make one for herself and her son. When she did so her jar of meal was not used up and her cruse of oil did not run dry. All this was representative, like everything else recorded about Elijah, and in general throughout the Word. ‘A famine in the land because there was no rain’ represented truth laid waste within the Church; ‘a widow in Zarephath’ those outside the Church who have a desire for truth; ‘a cake which she had to make for him first’ the good of love to the Lord, whom, from the very little she had, she was to love above herself and her son. ‘The jar of meal’ means truth derived from good, and ‘the cruse of oil’ charity and love. ‘Elijah’ represents the Word, by means of which such things are effected.” *Arcana Coelestia* 4844.12

“‘To raise up the dead and vivify them’ means resurrection into life, not only by natural death but also by spiritual death; resurrection into life is effected by reformation and regeneration, and these by the removal and separation of evils, which condemn a person, and which are spiritual death.” *Apocalypse Explained* 899

Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers students the following choices:

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.’” (1 Kings 17:1)

Projects and Activities (for answers, see back of lesson)

Questions

Answer each question with a short sentence.

Food and Water

At the beginning of the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath Elijah prophesied a drought due to Ahab and Jezebel’s evil. Fill in a chart and answer questions about food and water.

Additional Project and Activity Choices for Parents and Teachers

Uses for Olive Oil

Olive oil is mentioned in many stories of the Word. Explore the uses of olive oil and the characteristics of olive wood. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-uses-for-olive-oil-1-kings-17.pdf>

A Chart of the Kings of Israel and Judah

As you learn about the kings of Israel and Judah, complete a chart. As you fill in the spaces, think about whether the king is good or evil. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-a-chart-of-the-kings-of-israel-and-judah-1-kings-2-kings.pdf>

Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

1 Kings 17:1-24

Vocabulary

pronouncement—ruling or decree

dire—dreadful, terrible

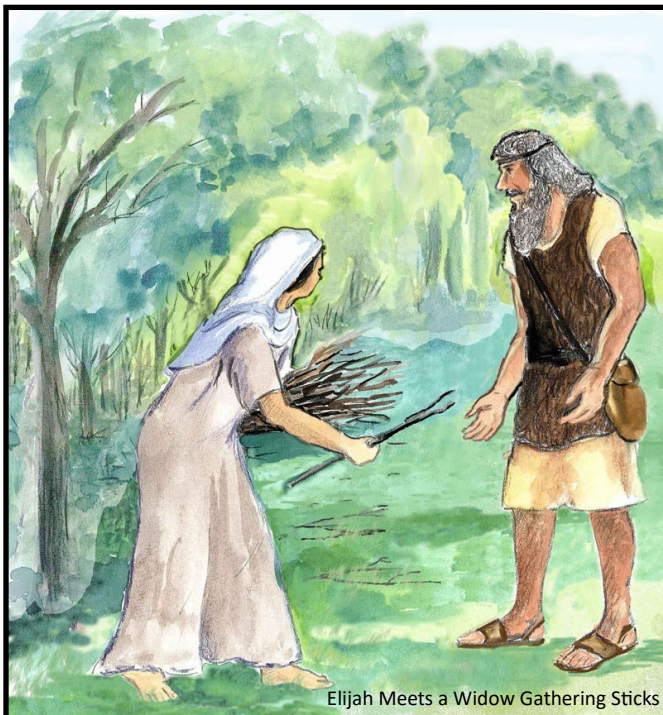
stunning—remarkable, astonishing

Elijah Warns Ahab

The prophet Elijah appears suddenly in the Word. The Word says nothing about his childhood or his preparation to become the most important prophet since Moses. His story begins with a bold pronouncement. Elijah tells Ahab that there will be no more rain. What led up to this dire situation? One bad king in Israel followed another. Ahab was the worst of them all. The wickedness that Ahab and his wife Jezebel brought to Israel was reflected in a terrible drought. A drought stands for a lack of truth and goodness in a person or a group of people. At the time of Ahab there was scarcely anyone who even knew of Jehovah, much less worshipped Him. The Lord's Word was essentially lost.

Elijah Hides by the Brook

After Elijah gave the king this stunning news, his life was in grave danger. Throughout his story, we see Elijah following the Lord's



commands. The Lord told him to go and hide by a brook called Cherith. So Elijah traveled to the brook. As the Lord had promised, the ravens who lived in that land fed him. The ravens brought Elijah food each morning and evening. He also drank water from the brook. However, the drought began while Elijah was hiding and the brook dried up. Elijah could live for a while with little food, but water was essential for him, for the ravens who were feeding him, and for the food the ravens were bringing him. So, the Lord told Elijah to go to Zarephath where he would meet a widow who would feed him.

The Miracle of Flour and Oil

Elijah went north to Zarephath. Once again the Lord provided for him, as He had said He would. When Elijah came to the gate of the city, he saw a widow gathering sticks. He asked her for a cup of water. While this would usually have been a simple request, it must have seemed difficult during the severe drought. However, the widow went to get the water. As she went, Elijah called out to her and asked for bread as well. Her reply reflects how desperate she felt.

“As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.” (1 Kings 17:12)

What do the widow’s words tell us about how she felt?

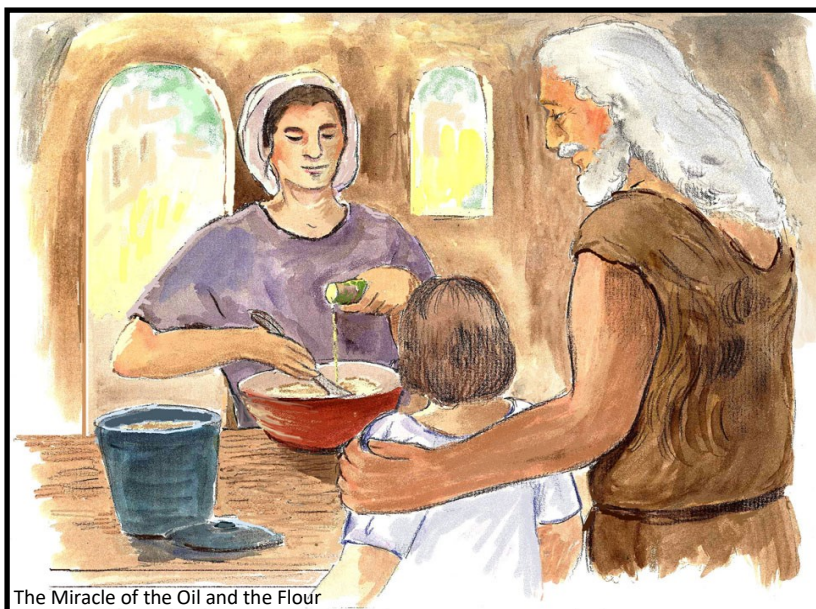
The widow was sure she and her son were about to die, but she listened to Elijah and made him a loaf of bread with her remaining flour and oil. She appeared to have faith that the God of whom Elijah spoke would fulfill His promise to provide for her and her son. And the Lord did provide with the miracle of the flour and oil that did not run out until the drought was over.

The Widow’s Son Becomes Sick

So Elijah stayed with the widow and she made bread for him and her son for many days. Then one day her son became sick, so sick that he stopped breathing. The widow’s faith in Elijah and the Lord was tested—she wondered if she and her son had been saved just to have her son die days later. She even accused Elijah of killing her son. We might wonder why the widow, who had already experienced the Lord’s saving power, would question it.

During difficult times many people’s faith in the Lord is tested. Hardship often causes people to spend so much time thinking about how to overcome their troubles that they forget the Lord is present. In the widow’s case, she was living in a land that had almost completely forgotten the

Lord’s very existence. If you remember, she had little water or flour and oil left to make bread when Elijah met her. This represents an even more important lack in her life—a lack of love and wisdom. With Elijah’s presence she received more of these qualities as is shown by the continual supply of oil and flour. However, a few days of seeing the Lord’s truth and goodness is not enough to change our whole way of thinking or



The Miracle of the Oil and the Flour

living.

The Widow's Son Is Saved

Elijah was not upset by the widow's accusations. Instead, he took the child into his arms and carried him to the upper room in which he had been living. He put the child onto his own bed and called out to the Lord.

“O Lord my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?” (1 Kings 17:20)

Elijah's next actions seem to indicate that he believed that the Lord could restore life to the widow's son. He laid himself on the son three times and called out once again to the Lord.

“O Lord my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him.” (1 Kings 17:21)

The Lord did as Elijah asked, and He gave life back to the child. Elijah then carried the boy down from the upper room and handed him to his mother. As you can imagine, she was overjoyed. She proclaimed that Elijah was truly a man of God, and that the words of the Lord which Elijah spoke were the truth. The miracle had restored her faith.



Giving Back Life

Giving back life which seems to be lost is an important theme in the Word. Elijah brought the widow's son back to life with the Lord's power. The prophet Elisha, who follows Elijah, is also given the power to restore a boy to life. During the Lord's ministry on earth, he brought three people back to life. In these cases, the Lord returned the people who had been dead back to their families, just as Elijah and Elisha returned sons to their mothers.

The Lord constantly brings people who have died back to life. They are not brought back to life on earth, but into the spiritual world. Elijah's miracle is like the reality of awakening to a new life in heaven. The Heavenly Doctrine talks about seeing families reunited in the other world. We also learn that those who go to heaven find close friends who feel to them like family.

When people choose a life of evil, they are spiritually “dead”. It is as if they are living without food and water—because they are trying to live without the Lord's love and wisdom. When they allow the Lord to bring them back to a life of truth and goodness, it is said that they have been “reborn” or come back to life. This happens gradually in a process called regeneration. The Lord does not expect us to choose goodness over evil as suddenly as the widow's son was brought back to life. Rather, He works with us throughout our lives to help us make the wise and loving choices that will lead to eternal life in heaven.

Activity Overview

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.’” (1 Kings 17:1)

Projects and Activities (answers at back of lesson)

Choose one or two.

Questions

Answer each question with a short sentence.

Food and Water

At the beginning of the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath Elijah prophesied a drought due to Ahab and Jezebel’s evil. Fill in a chart and answer questions about food and water.

Questions—Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

I Kings 17:1-24

Answer each question with a short sentence.

1. What did the Lord command Elijah to tell Ahab?
2. Where was Elijah to hide?
3. How was Elijah to be fed?
4. When Elijah went to Zarephath, what did he find a widow woman doing?
5. What did Elijah ask of the woman?
6. What were the two ingredients of the food the woman prepared for Elijah?
7. How was the woman given food for a long time?
8. What happened to the woman's son?
9. How did the Lord convince the widow that He is the living God?
10. What is being illustrated in the miracles of bringing people back to life? 1
11. What does it mean to be "reborn" spiritually?
12. What does it mean to have a spiritual drought? (Remember that there is no food or water in a drought.)

Food and Water

Drought

In the beginning of the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, Elijah prophesied a drought in the land due to Ahab’s and Jezebel’s evil. There would be no rain, and so water and food would be scarce. A lack of food pictures a lack of love and goodness. Why? A lack of water pictures a lack of wisdom and truth. Why? Before you answer these “whys” fill in the chart and answer the questions below.

Qualities and Characteristics of Food and Water

It is the qualities and characteristics of something that causes it to picture a spiritual idea. What are the qualities and characteristics of food and water that give them their spiritual meaning?

	Food	Water
Satisfies what?	Hunger	Thirst
Solid or liquid?		
opaque or clear?		
eat or drink?		
odor or not?		
feels like?		
Nutritional value?		
Source of energy?		

1. How long can you live without food?
2. How long can you live without water?
3. Which does the body use up faster—food or water?
4. Which one gives you the most pleasure?

Now answer the following questions:

- Why does a lack of food picture a lack of love and goodness?
- Why does a lack of water picture a lack of wisdom and truth?

Answers

Lesson 10

Questions—Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

1. There would be no rain or dew. 2. by the Brook Cherith. 3. By ravens. 4. Gathering sticks. 5. Elijah asked for a cup of water and a little bread. 6. Flour and oil. 7. The Lord sent a miracle. 8. The widow's son died. 9. He brought the widow's son back to life. 10. That we can be reborn spiritually. 11. To stop being selfish and turn to the Lord. 12. To not read the Word or have access to the truth.