

## “Lessons by the Brook”

### Introduction

Last Sunday we began a study in the life of a most significant man of God. Observing God’s interaction with Elijah and Elijah’s spiritual journey in his day provides insight and principles for us in our day which is not unlike what Elijah faced. God called Elijah to confront a widespread defection by the Jews from pure allegiance to Yahweh. All of the Kings ruling the Northern tribes of Israel after the split followed after the sins of the initial king Jeroboam. In fact, the God evaluated each king as to whether they followed after God like King David or embraced the ways of Jeroboam who established worship of other god’s. Some were worse than others, but none of them served the one true God. It was said that Omri, Ahab’s father, was worse than all before him and Ahab surpassed his evil.

*In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. 1 Kings 16:29-33*

Baal was considered the storm god. Elijah set out to prove that Yahweh not Baal was in charge of the rain.

Even though we know very little concerning the background of Elijah, we track his journey as God’s special instrument; chosen at a specific time for a specific purpose. We monitor his movements from complete anonymity and obscurity, into the throne room of a hostile king Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel. We observe his isolation and obscurity in wilderness wanderings and wonderings. We notice his obedience to God’s direction to reside in a remote city where he ministers to an unknown widow and her young son. We join the throngs of people at the summit of Mount Carmel to watch him boldly confront the gods of the age followed by a period of despair and depression. We stand in awe of this man of like passion learning to hear and follow His God. We celebrate a powerful intercessor. We sympathize as he wrestles with profound feelings of insecurity, loneliness and failure. And in it all, we come to realize that it is not the power of the man himself but the power of His God demonstrated through a frail but willing vessel. It reminds me of Paul’s assertion that God’s power is displayed in our weakness.

I will try to discover and display the timeless spiritual principles in play as we follow Elijah’s journey from place to place by God’s specific direction.

Most of those periods in Elijah’s life follow a definite instruction from the Lord.

*“And the word of the Lord came to Elijah”*

### **I. Lessons from the Palace where Elijah boldly announced God’s judgment for sin. 1 Kings 17:1**

#### **A. Elijah came from an unknown obscure background**

**Possible timeless principle #1 from the Palace.**

*God is more interested in backbone than background.*

#### **B. Elijah spoke FOR God**

*God speaks to and through people.*

#### **C. Elijah knew his God.**

**Possible timeless lesson #3 from the palace.**

*Know your God*

**D. Elijah knew his standing with God**

**Possible timeless lesson #4**

*Know your standing with God.*

**E. Elijah understood and pursued his purpose with boldness.**

**Possible timeless lesson from the palace #5**

*Know your purpose in life*

**F. Elijah prayed fervently.**

**Possible timeless lesson from the palace #6**

*Earnest prayer is inseparable from all aspects of God's work.*

**II. Lessons from the brook where Elijah learned to trust God in obscurity and isolation. 1 King 17:2-7**

*And the word of the LORD came to him: "Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 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. He went and lived by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land. 1 Kings 17:2-7*

**A. God provided specific direction 17:2-3**

*The word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.*

Many of the transition periods in Elijah's life were triggered by a word from the Lord. It is evident from the very beginning that Elijah cultivated a special relationship with God. He trained his ears to hear. The word of the Lord came to Elijah. Sometimes God speaks even when we don't ask. Following Elijah's bold confrontation with Ahab, God unveiled the next step. "Go away from here." Go into isolation. Go hide yourself. He told Elijah the specific place to lay low. Isolate yourself by the brook Cherith (cutting place). (See Map)

I imagine that Elijah was not very popular with King Ahab and before Jezebel could spring into action, God instructed Elijah to lay low even though God was fully capable of protecting Elijah anywhere from anyone. This is similar to Joseph's instruction to take the baby Jesus to Egypt till Herod died.

**Possible timeless lesson from the brook #1**

*God communicates specific direction to His servants.*

Just how does the "Word of the Lord" come to us? How do we know what God wants us to do? How can we find God's direction? Everyone wants to know the answer to that question. God communicates primarily through His written word. The Scriptures are the only truly reliable source of faith and practice even though many still use it to their own ends through misinterpretation. Don't use the Bible as a magic code book. Don't use it like one would use a horoscope. God wants us to know Him through His Word. We must come to know Him and His ways through the Word. We must pay attention to the specific principles presented throughout the Bible.

Paul prayed that the Colossians would be "saturated" with a knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and understanding so that they would live pleasing to Him in every aspect. Col 1:9 Only when we understand His written word will we ever be prepared to hear specific promptings (spoken word) without getting deceived by a wrong voice. God's specific "inner prompting" will **NEVER** contradict what He has revealed in His word.

If we need a specific direction, He will supply a specific direction. If God does not supply specific direction, then seek wisdom from basic Biblical principles. If God has clearly communicated His will in Scripture, don't expect Him to repeat it. Should I have committed adultery. Should I divorce my spouse? Should I lie or steal? Should I pass on an evil report about my neighbor? God does not need to answer these because He has already clearly communicated. Why didn't God answer Saul when He cried out to God for direction? (God had already told him judgment was coming.)

In this case, God gave Elijah some very specific instructions.

*"The steps of a man are established by the LORD; and He delights in his way." Psalm 37:23*

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6*

In light of the lesson that God specifically directs His children, what should we do?

- Wait for His direction.
- Listen for His direction through various sources.
- Be saturated with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding
- Beware of false direction.

*Thank you Lord that you direct our paths. Help me not to run ahead of you but wait for your leading. Help me to listen for your word. Help me discern when I am given bad direction.*

## **Possible lesson by the brook #2**

***God doesn't always unveil His whole plan at once.***

Don't expect that God will reveal every step of His plan ahead of time. He often unveils one step at a time. Act on what has been revealed until He reveals the next step. Much of our growth depends upon obedience to His current instruction. God only revealed the next step to Elijah. Go to the brook Cherith where I will take care of you. In light of this lesson what should I feel or do? Be patient. Don't demand God to lay it all out. Walk in the light you have.

*Lord, help me hear and be content with just the next step.*

## **Possible timeless principle #3**

**God sometimes directs His children into obscurity and isolation.**

What is the purpose of this obscurity and isolation? He was in the palace. He could have developed a high profile ministry from the palace. He could have served from headquarters continuing to preach the truth during the famine. Why the obscurity of Cherith? God has work to do IN Elijah. God must do significant things IN us before we can do significant things FOR Him. Before we tackle Carmel we must learn to trust God in isolation (Cherith) and limited ministry (Zerephath.)

If we concentrate on the depth of our relationship **WITH** God, He will complete the breadth of our ministry **FOR** God. Obscurity allows time for reflection and solid foundational growth. We have the time to deepen relationship with God. It is a time to build character. It is a time to learn what it means to trust God alone for all one's physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs. As the draught took its toll on the land, it became more and more frightening to be isolated and trust God alone. Many men used mightily by God first learned through obscurity and isolation?

Moses, Abraham, Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, Jesus, John, Jeremiah, Isaiah.

Here, Elijah learned to be content and not run ahead of God or away from God but to rest in the protection and provision of God in the face of difficulty.

Meyers states:

*Even the faith you have must be pruned, and educated, and matured, that it may become strong enough to subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, and turn to flight armies of aliens.*

It is beside the brook that we must learn the value of the hidden life.

It is where one must learn to die to the desires of the flesh.

It is where pride dies a slow death.

It is where one learns to find his life in God not in the distractions of our culture.

It is where one learns the lessons only loneliness and isolation can teach.

It also gives God time to orchestrate events and prepare hearts for the Mt. Carmel showdown.

It is often frightening to be alone with ourselves.

We stand face to face with God and our own selves.

It is where our standing with God is validated.

People resist taking the time to deal with unaddressed issues lurking in the soul. It is the God-ordained times of obscurity that prepare the heart for realizing fruit that lasts. It helps purge the flesh-driven desires for personal greatness rather than impact for the kingdom. What might God be doing in us? What lessons do I need to learn that I can only learn in isolation and obscurity? Don't fight obscurity; it is where God does some of His finest work **IN** us before He can do anything of significance **THROUGH** us.

*Lord, help me be content wherever You have put me and to trust You no matter the obscurity. I want to serve You faithfully whether anyone else notices or not.*

### **B. God promised to supply Elijah's need 17:4**

*"It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there."*

Along with the instruction was the promise of provision. There will be water and food in the place where I designate. Elijah probably was not too keen on the raven part but, as we will see, he obeyed anyway.

### **Possible timeless lesson from the brook #4**

***When God prescribes, God provides.***

God's promises of protection and provision appear all through the Bible. Be sure you are in the place He directs to receive it.

*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 2 Peter 1:3-4*

*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19*

History resounds with examples of God's supernatural provision.

*Matthew 6:33—But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

*Lord, help me to wait for and rest in Your protection and provision. I believe that You will amply supply whatever I need at the time needed to carry out the mission You have assigned to me.*

### **C. Elijah obeyed the word of the Lord 17:5**

*"So Elijah went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 1 Ki 17:5-6*

Elijah did not hesitate to go where the Lord directed Him to go, even though it was a wilderness place of hardship and obscurity. He obeyed with the expectation of God's provision for his need even in a time of draught.

### **Possible timeless lesson #5**

#### **God's command requires our compliance**

There is a difficult balance to note here. Don't run ahead of God. Don't lag behind or run away either. Jonah found that tactic futile. Elijah didn't just hear, he obeyed the voice of the Lord. Elijah stayed in one place until God gave specific direction to move on. Elijah was content where God put Him. We won't enjoy the blessing if we resist the direction.

So often we try to make something happen when God appears to be moving too slow. The whole Arab Jew conflict arose from Abraham's impatience concerning God's promise. He tried to do in his own strength what God planned to do supernaturally.

*Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD?"*

*Behold, to OBEY is better than sacrifice, and to HEED than the fat of rams. 1 Samuel 15:22*

How am I doing? What hinders instant and unquestioned obedience to God's direction? How do I need to change my thinking, feeling? What can I do now? What has God asked me to do that I have been resisting?

*Arthur Pink said, "God does not grant fresh revelation until there has been compliance with that which has been already received."*

*Lord, I want to both hear and heed Your direction. Forgive my reluctance. Forgive me for thinking I know better. Help me to come to the point where obeying You is more important than anything else.*

### **D. God provided for Elijah's physical needs 17:6**

*And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook.*

It also is important to realize that when God directs us into obscurity, it is for a purpose and He will provide for our every need while we are there. God fulfilled His promise to the letter; right down to the very instruments of provision.

*"Rations from Ravens Catering Service"*

Notice that God earlier said He would command the ravens to meet the need. When we get nervous about our needs, remember that God is the God who controls the hearts of men and beast. God used a most unlikely instrument to minister to Elijah. The raven was an unclean animal; a scavenger. Have you seen what ravens eat?

God commanded the ravens to bring bread and "roadkill" twice a day. Sometimes we miss the provision because we don't like who God commands to provide. This was another case among many where God employed both natural and supernatural provision. Elijah accessed water from a natural stream (for now

anyway). Elijah received bread and meat by a miraculous means. Normally ravens take rather than give, but they are under divine command.

### **Possible lesson from the brook #6**

#### **Be open to every source of provision**

God kept his word to Elijah and Elijah ate bread and meat every morning and night.  
God provided only what was needed.

Elijah learned to trust God for his daily provision.  
He lived each day by faith.  
God didn't pack a cave with food.  
He sent the ravens morning and evening which required daily trust.

### **Possible Lesson by the brook #7**

#### **God provides only what is needed for the moment not want is wanted for a monument.**

This principle is clear in the Disciple's prayer? "Give us **this day** our **daily** bread." God provided manna for the wandering Israelites only on a day by day basis. God wants us to be dependent daily. He warned the Israelites not to forget God's provision when they entered a fruitful land and no longer were dependent on God's daily supernatural provision. We continually need God for even the ability to provide for ourselves.

*Lord, I can get pretty demanding. Forgive me for demanding more than daily provision.  
Help me to trust You for my "daily bread" from whatever source You designate.*

#### **E. The brook eventually dried up 17:7**

*And it happened after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.*  
When the brook dried up and there was no longer and resource for water, God will appoint another means of provision. Why did the brook dry up? Elijah prayed for it to stop raining. There were things God was doing for a greater cause than Elijah's comfort. He found himself suffering along with the people he sought to influence.

### **Possible lesson by the brook #8**

#### ***Be willing to endure the discomfort of answered prayer.***

If you pray for longsuffering, expect the means to longsuffering; tribulation. If you pray for a deeper work in your life, expect God to bring the things such a work requires.

### **Possible lesson by the brook #9**

#### ***God dries up resources to initiate new direction so trust the Provider not the provision***

At times we get too dependent on the gift not the giver. We become too dependent on the provision rather than the Provider. God wants us to have a daily dynamic relationship with Him. Too often we establish more connection with the principles rather than the Provider. God's principles only reflect His character and desires.

It is like doing everything your spouse leaves in a note to do but never talking to your spouse again. The important thing is relationship with the one who daily reveals Himself to us. Often God dries up a resource to

transition us into a new level or different direction. Elijah must keep His eyes on God and trust in his promise to provide in spite of changing circumstances. So often we get hung up on one source of provision when God has many avenues by which He plans to meet our needs.

Have I been dependent on one particular resource for too long? Is God indicating a new direction by drying up a stream?

*Lord, You are able to provide for me from many sources. Help me not to keep demanding that You continue particular blessing in my life when You may have other things for me to do and learn and greater blessing to experience.*

God hid Elijah by the brook where he learned to trust God in isolation and obscurity.

He learned to wait for God's specific directions.

He learned that God often uses isolation and obscurity to bring about His plan.

He learned that God doesn't always lay out the whole plan at once.

He learned that when God prescribes, God provides.

He learned that God's command requires man's compliance.

He learned that God often employs both natural and supernatural means of provision.

He learned to be open to every source God may use to provide.

He learned that God usually provides on what is needed for the moment.

He learned that God sometimes dries up resources to bring new direction.