



Metro Calvary – Roseville CA
Richard Cimino
February 8, 2010

1 Kings 17:2-8

Related Topics: Ahab; Jezebel; Elijah; One Sentence Ministry; The Brook Cherith; The Place of Preparation; The Place of Cutting; Whittled On By God; Absent Yourself; Obedience; God's Word; God's Provision;

CHAPTER 17

REVIEW

Last week we saw how Elijah — the greatest prophet of Scripture — stepped on to the pages of Scripture with the little word — **AND**. It's a word that connects and builds on thoughts or ideas! It is the word that the Holy Spirit used in Chapter 16 to show the progressively building wickedness of the Northern kingdom — culminating in the rule of Ahab and Jezebel. After stringing together wickedness upon wickedness the Holy Spirit gives the SUM of it all — *“...Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were”*

BEARING IN MIND that there were no chapter breaks in the original manuscripts — The narrative would have simply continued with another use of the word **AND** — **¹And Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead**. The Holy Spirit wants us to see Elijah as connected to that moldy, malevolent, dark, demonic generation! Through 8 dynasties this wickedness has been building *and* building *and* building *and* building *and* building *and* building — **AND** — God has a man ready to stand for Him and with Him against this tidal wave of wickedness.

¹Elijah... said to Ahab, “As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.” ²And the word of the Lord came to him, ³“Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. ⁴You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” ⁵So 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. ⁶And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. ⁷And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

Here we see the very interesting way that the ministry of Elijah is going to continue. There is no doubt that he is the man that God is going to use in the face of a generation — will make a greater impact on his generation than anyone else. He walks in before Ahab and says, *“As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.”* Then the Lord says, *“Depart from here.”* He has a one sentence ministry! That would be incredibly frustrating! If you wait for years and pray for years to get into ministry. And you find yourself before the king and you say what’s burning in your heart and you say, *“Now what Lord?”* and the Lord says, *“That’s enough, now get out of here and go hide yourself.”* Frustrating would be an understatement.

I want us to think about this. As we look at this passage, there was no one with him at Cherith except the ravens. Only Elijah and Lord and those ravens knew what happened there. But Elijah discovered that his time at the Brook Cherith was so significant that he passed the account on — perhaps to the school of the prophets. I think that during Elijah’s season at the brook Cherith that Elijah discovered that no man stands on Mount Carmel until he goes to Cherith and Serephath. No man can call fire down from heaven until they’ve been refined and prepared. Isn’t that the rub? Isn’t that what is so hard about ministry. We like to be able to speak for God, to be used by God. But we don’t like the time of preparation and refining. So God has handed this record because we are so oriented to doing rather than being. I pray that as we study the life of this man that we will desire to be like this man, desire to be the man or woman that he can

use to touch our generation, to learn to be the man or woman that has communion with the Living God

We look at our generation and we are ready to GO! I'm sure Elijah (because the Bible says that he was a man of like passions as you and I), said — *“O.K. Lord, where now?” You want me to preach in the streets of Samaria? I'm ready to go!* And the Lord said, *NO, you're not ready. Get out of here and go by yourself to the Brook Cherith.*

The very name of the place tells us what God is up to in this command. Cherith in the Hebrew means to cut or to cut down or to whittle. By the way, if cutting doesn't sound bad enough — whittling sounds worse. A cut might be painful but it's quick. Whittling is what old guys do in a rocking chair for weeks! *God, please don't send to someplace called whittle!* Zerephath means crucible — and that's the next stop in the life of Elijah! Isn't it amazing how we want to be involved in the kinds of things Elijah did, but we give no thought to the whittling and refining that God did in Elijah. God had things for Elijah to do, but he was pre-eminently concerned with Elijah being God's man. So first we go to whittle.

ILLUSTRATION: *During the reign of Oliver Cromwell the government of England ran out of silver with which to make the coinage of the realm. Cromwell therefore sent his men everywhere to see if they could find more of the precious metal. They returned to report that the only silver they could find was in the statues of the saints which were on display in various cathedrals of the land. “Good!” replied Cromwell, “we will melt down the saints and put them into circulation!”*

Tan, P. L. (1996, c1979). Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : A treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers. Garland TX: Bible Communications.

That's what God wants to do in our lives. God doesn't want us to just be found in church. He wants to get us into circulation, but He has to melt us down first. Easy to say but.....

It's hard to preach passages like this because God is going to say to me at some point — ***You preached it!*** And if you're laughing — **you** heard it too my friends! We're in this together!

Job 4:1-5 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:² “If one ventures a word with you, will you be impatient? Yet who can keep from speaking?³

Behold, you have instructed many, and you have strengthened the weak hands.

⁴ Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have made firm the feeble knees. ⁵ But now it has come to you, and you are impatient; it touches you,

and you are dismayed.

³... hide yourself

This means much more than to go someplace where people can't find you. It literally means — absent yourself. The prerequisite for being used by God is that you absent yourself. John the Baptist would say — *I must decrease and He must increase*. When people look at you and me they should see more of Jesus and less of you and me. If you want to be used of the Lord — *Go on and hide yourself!*

HUGE POINT — As Elijah goes to this place he is not going to be alone.

QUOTE: John Trapp

"Elijah could not be alone, so long as he had God and himself to converse with. A good man is never less alone, than when alone."

We see this throughout the Scriptures —

Joseph in the house of Potiphar refused to engage in sexual sin with Potiphar's wife — was falsely imprisoned for 13 YEARS. Those 13 years were a time of refining. We are told that *The Lord was with Joseph* ([Genesis 39:21](#)). That was Joseph's Cherith.

- Moses was not prepared in the house Pharaoh. He was prepared on the back side of the wilderness for 40 YEARS. That was his Cherith.
- David — wasn't prepared to sit on the throne by killing a giant. It was in all those years that he was being hounded like a fugitive by king Saul that prepared David to sit on the throne.
- John the Baptizer — Elijah's reflection (if-you-would) spent his adult life in the wilderness preparing to announce the coming of the Messiah.
- Paul spent three years in the desert of Arabia being prepared to preach the Gospel to the non-Jewish world.

God has a Cherith for each of us. Not just one time and one place, but He has those places where He cuts on us, and teaches us to absent ourselves so that the world might see Jesus in us.

I don't think it necessarily a geographical place — a literal wilderness. But I do believe that there is a sanctified loneliness that He lets us experience. A place that no one can know or be touched by but you. You can be in a room full of people — like this one — and you feel all alone.

God reserves the right to take us to a place that even when we want to be with other people somehow we stand alone. He takes me there. Something is going on and God is going to force me to drink from a stream that no one else knows about. It is frustrating to my wife, frustrating to those who know me. Cherith — He takes us there.

CHERITH was a place of OBEDIENCE.

²And the word of the Lord came to him, ³“Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith,

DON'T MISS THIS — Elijah didn't have to sit around asking himself “What's my five year plan” or “What is my long range plan?” It says that ***the Word of the Lord came to him***. Here we are week in and week out, we have the Word of God. We have it in a more sure way that Elijah had it! If we look into it we hear God telling us the same thing that He told Elijah! We are told that we need to get alone with God because there isn't anything that is going to change anything in this generation but a life that is on fire for God. A life that is marked by it's consecration to God. It's a life that in a sense can speak without a word. Cherith is where that life is formed. It's a place of obedience.

NOTE THIS WITH ME — It's also a place of protection and a place of sustenance.

⁴You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” ⁵So he went and did according to the word of the Lord.

If Elijah had gone to Maui, none of the ravens would have showed up there!

We don't want to go to Cherith. We want to go to Maui. Think about this, if Elijah had gone to wherever he wanted to go, the ravens would have still

gone to Cherith and delivered their cargo there because that is where God had commanded them to go. It is interesting that in the book of **Job** (**38:41**) we are told when the young ravens cry out that their parents won't even feed them, they're left on their own to find food. But here are these ravens coming every day dropping off food for Elijah. They will **feed you there!**

“Depart from here and turn eastward

TURN EASTWARD — This is where we get our term “to orient our self” or “to re-orient our self.” He is saying to Elijah —

“You have stood before Ahab, but now you have to re-orient your life!” We’re gong to do some whittling — we’re gonna do some cutting arway — cutting arway of YOU. You see Elijah, you’ve heard My Word, but you don’t know anything about manna yet. You don’t know anything about food falling out of the sky, let alone fire! You only know that I’ve told you to go stand before Ahab and say this one sentence. But you don’t know anything about supernatural provision or supernatural power. I need you to go to Cherith.

Now we read the account of these ravens and we say — We can’t really take this literally!

TRUE ACCOUNT: *Years ago at Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa Keith Ritter — Missionary to China — told us of a Chinese national who was imprisoned for his faith. They were trying to starve him to death in his solitary confinement. The man began to pray and he heard a scratching in the wall. Suddenly a rat poked through with a big carrot in his mouth. It came back every day — sometimes with a cucumber — sometimes with an apple. Fresh produce every day. A rat! Living in our hyper hygenic culture we wouldn’t have appreciated a rat! But if I was in that place and God was delivering, I’d be eatin! It gets more amazing — One day the man was granted the unexpected privilege of having a visitor. That day the rat showed up with 2 carrots! The God of Elijah fed this man in China.*

Everyday, the ravens showed up, right on time. We don’t always show up at church on time, but these ravens showed up on time, every day.

By the way, as we read this account of Elijah we need to bear in mind that to the Jew a raven was unclean — it might as well have been a flying rat. But Elijah didn’t eat the unclean raven — God delivered kosher food by

way of an unclean carrier. **There's a lesson here** for those who are involved in bringing spiritual food to a starving world.

QUOTE: Charles Spurgeon

Makes the point that one can bring spiritual food to others and still be unclean spiritually themselves. "But see, too, how possible it is for us to carry bread and meat to God's servants, and do, some good things for his church, and yet be ravens still!"

Fresh food — fresh running water — everyday!

What was Elijah thinking ever day while he was there? He doesn't have a One Year Bible. He doesn't have Spurgeon's Morning and Evening. I'm sure that he prayed. But I don't think he heard the voice of the Lord every day. There were days that it was just him and the ravens. Probably got to know them really well — gave them names.

We don't know how long he was there. It's believed that he was there for at least a year — maybe two. Then we read —

***7*And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.**

If you have read ahead through the chapter you know that Elijah is going from Cherith to Zerephath — gentile territory. But God has prepared him for that. *"Gentiles — that's nothing! I've been fed by ravens for the past year — I can handle gentiles!"*

He's going to meet a widow there and he's going to say, *"Will you do me a favor and make a little bread?"* The widow is going to look at him and say — *"Sorry. I've only got this little bit of flour and just enough oil in this container to make a cake of bread for me and my son and then we're gonna die!"* He's going to say — *"NO, No, No — I've already learned this lesson. The flour isn't going to run out and the jug of oil won't fail."* She's going to ask a reasonable question, *"How do you know that?"* He's going to say, *"I just spent a year at Cherith. I've learned that ravens can drop food from heaven and that a brook can flow in a drought. God sent me here and that provision is not gonna run out until God is done with what He wants to do."*

I'm sure that Elijah enjoyed the sound of the brook. But one morning he wakes up and he's not hearing it running. There came a day when there's just puddles and little things are starting to swim in it.

I wonder what Elijah thought. My FIRST response and perhaps Elijah's would have been (because we know that he was a man of like passions) — *What are You doing Lord? YOU sent me here and now the brook is drying up?*

I wonder if he said — *God, my brook is drying up. What have I done wrong?* If Job's counselors were there they would have said — Your brook is drying up because there's sin in your life.

It's not that he's out of God's will. He is in the middle of God's will. It's not that God's love and concern for Elijah has failed in any way.

Our brooks dry up some times! What is God doing in those moments?

Well God was doing something in Elijah's life as the brook began to dry up. I'm sure that it would have been easy for Elijah to settle in and get comfortable next to that running brook. The rest of the land was in a drought, people were starving. He was camping out in a place with fresh running water and food delivered to his doorstep every day.

But when the brook begins to dry up Elijah is driven to ask, "What now Lord!" Had the Lord not called Valerie and me to Northern California I would have been more than comfortable in Orange County. Best beaches in the America. Amazing food. Amazing weather. But the Lord sent us up here because there was something he wanted us to do here.

Here's what happened with Elijah — When the brook started to dry up you can bet that it sharpened up Elijah's hearing.

When our brooks dry up we get back on our knees and we get back into His Word and we begin to listen for His Word.

The drying brook preceded Verse 8

⁸Then the word of the Lord came to him, ⁹“Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there

The drying brook caused Elijah to return to the posture of listening!

You see, God leads us one step at a time! He isn't mysterious. He isn't hiding. He says to Elijah, Go and say these words to Ahab. What if Ahab wants to kill me or imprison me or torture me? God doesn't tell Elijah any of that. He limits the information so that we are only accountable for what He does tell us.

Then God said, Go east and go to the Brook Cherith because I've commanded the ravens to feed you there and there you will have running water. How Long? What do you mean, ravens?

It says, SO — HE — WENT. I want to be like that. Wouldn't it be great to be able to have that written on our grave stone — *So he went!*

The will of God for our lives is a progressive revelation. As we obey what we do know, He unveils the next bit.

Valerie and I would never be at Metro had we not gone to Grass Valley.

Are you at Cherith? Is God whittling and cutting?

Is God asking you to absent yourself? There are plenty of people in this world that are just like you and me. Don't you want to be different? Don't you want there to be less of you and more of Jesus?

Is there a brook drying up in your life? F.B. Meyer mentions different kinds of drying brooks we might experience:

- The drying brook of popularity — ebbing away as from John the Baptist.
- The drying brook of health
- The drying brook of finances
- The drying brook of friendship

Let's bring all that the Lord has spoken to our hearts tonight before Him as we take the bread and the cup. As we take the bread and the cup we can confess our every failure in these areas, knowing that the Body of Jesus was broken and the blood of Jesus was shed for them. As we take the bread and the cup we can view our aloneness — and the cutting and whittling — the drying brooks — in the light of the cross, and know that He loves us in the midst of all of it!