
Jehovah-Jireh; The Lord Provides

1Kings 17:1-16

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The Big Idea: *The LORD foresees our need and provides for it.*

Introduction Picture with me two scenarios of parents sending a child to summer camp.

Scenario One

The first scenario has parents sign up their child for camp. When they drop the child off at camp, he has no sleeping bag, swimming suit or flashlight. The parents haven't paid for the camp, labeled the child's clothes or made arrangements for picking the child up at the end of the camping session. In fact, they don't even know how long the camp is in session.

Scenario Two

Parents sign up their child for camp. They pay for the camp when they register the child. For two weeks before camp, the parents have been preparing the child. They have borrowed a sleeping bag. They received a list of needed supplies from the camp and have carefully checked the list making sure their child has everything on the list he needs. The flashlight has new batteries in it, all the clothes are labeled with their child's name and they have even included a family picture and writing paper and stamped envelopes. They have the dates the camp is in session marked on their calendar and when they drop their child off they let the child know the arrangements for picking him up.

What kind of parent would foresee the need of his child and provide for it (even before the child knew of his need)? Isn't the answer "a good parent"? Which scenario depicts a good parent?

Jehovah-Jireh; the Lord provides

Vv.1-16

Today we want to continue exploring the names of God for the purpose of looking outside ourselves for all we need. We will look at the LORD with hope that He will give us the grace to trust Him. Last week we looked at the name Yahweh. We saw that the LORD has no needs. He is eternal, never-beginning and never-ending, self-sufficient and borrows nothing from anyone. His utter uniqueness and absolute completeness is seen in His name Yahweh. As a result of this awe-inspiring attribute, we can trust Him. We can trust Him to deliver us from all danger; danger from without and danger from within. From without, we see His deliverance from Satan and his present evil age. The LORD protects those who trust in Him from our great adversary. Also, concerning from within, the LORD delivers us from our sin. He redeems us from the slavery of original and ongoing sin. We have victory in Him because He is Yahweh! The ultimate deliverance was seen in rescuing us from the penalty of sin. Yahweh is a consuming fire for those who are not protected in Christ. The

LORD rescues His people from His own burning and eternal wrath as they take shelter in the Savior; Jesus Christ our Lord. This is what we saw last week.

This week we want to look at another aspect of the LORD as seen in His Name Jehovah-Jireh; the Lord provides.

“Jireh” comes from the Hebrew word “to see”. When God sees, He foresees. He knows what we need even before we know what we need. He foresees our need and provides for it (Similarly to a good parent who foresees a child’s need at camp). He is well able to provide for us as seen in the powerful story of Elijah and the widow. This story on which we will focus this morning is found in 1Kings 17:1-16. Notice as I read Scripture how this story shows that God is Jehovah-Jireh. <read the passage >

In providing for a Hebrew prophet

vv.1-14

In the first reading of this passage we can easily see the theme of Jehovah-Jireh; the Lord provides. We discover this by noticing the LORD’s provision for Elijah. The Lord sovereignly uses nature and people to provide for His servant.

A brook

vv.1-5

In vv.1-5 we see the Lord providing for His prophet when times were tough. Draught is in the land. Famine is over all. The Lord makes accommodations for Elijah by sending him to a brook from which he can drink and by which he can hide from the danger of Ahab.

Some birds

v.6

We also see the Lord providing for Elijah in v.6. He sends birds with meat to feed his servant. The Lord foresaw his need for food and provided through birds. The Lord is not restricted in providing for His people. He reigns over the skies and brooks and now we see he rules over birds. The obvious evidence here points us to Jehovah-Jireh; the LORD provides.

And a broken lady

vv.7-9

We also see the Lord providing for Elijah in vv.7-9. This unusual story highlights God’s provisional love and amazing power. In these vv. we see how the Lord reigns over the weak and feeble. We notice how the Lord rules hearts and causes people to help people. The Lord chooses the insignificant and weakest of ones to carry out His grand plan. We come now to a widow. As our preliminary read makes clear the LORD provides for his servant through a most unlikely source. This widow is dying. This widow has little resources. This widow, nevertheless, was used of God to provide sustenance in the midst of famine. The LORD is not limited. The LORD can use anything (as seen in the brook and birds) and anyone (as noticed in the broken lady).

In providing for a Gentile widow

Vv.10-16

If the above proof does not convince you of the power and compassion of the LORD to foresee needs and provide for them, perhaps seeing it in vv.10-16 will convince

you. Here in these vv. we notice Jehovah-Jireh providing for a Gentile widow and her son. This is a marvelous, miraculous and merciful scene. The Lord continues to give flour and oil so that all of them can eat and live.

Recap of first reading

And so, from our first reading of this story it is apparent that *the LORD foresees our need and provides for it*. In times of severe trial we can trust Him for all we need. In times of hopelessness we know we can trust Him if we know Him as Jehovah-Jireh; the Lord provides. He demonstrates the ability and desire in this story found in 1Kings 17:1-16.

Jehovah-Jireh; the Lord provides

Vv.1-16

Now this is a good story of the Lord's provision and should encourage us to look to Him for the sustenance we need when times are tough. But is that all there is in this text? Undoubtedly we are to pray for our daily bread. And we are to be mindful of His provision in this area. But upon a second look at this story we can see something utterly stunning. We will come away amazed over the truth that *the LORD foresees our need and provides for it if* we have eyes to see and ears to hear <pray for help to see>.

Look again with me at this story; the story of Jehovah-Jireh; the LORD provides.

as a bearer of bad news

v.1

Elijah comes on the scene without introduction. It is as though he simply fell out of heaven with the Word of the Lord. And what is the setting into which he comes?

Troubled times we see here. Gone is the Davidic kingdom. Gone is Solomon's reign. Gone are the glory days of Israel. Present are ominous times. Spiraling downward is a trend started with King Jeroboam. This wicked king took the idols of the Caananites into the house of the LORD. He led worship astray through sin known as syncretism; that is, the blending of biblical and pagan worship. This sin is worship through false worship. The narrative summarizes him and his sin in 13:34 that says, "this thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam so as to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth".

A pattern is introduced to the reader. "Walked in the way of Jeroboam" summarizes this blended pagan worship that led worship astray in Israel and provoked the Lord's wrath.

In the way of Jeroboam...

King Nadab walked (15:25f). And this was evil in the sight of the Lord.

King Baasha walked (15:33f). And this was evil in the sight of the Lord.

King Elah walked (16:12f). And this was evil in the sight of the Lord.

King Zimri walked (16:18f). And this was evil in the sight of the Lord.

King Omri walked (16:25f). And this was evil in the sight of the Lord.

And then the pattern breaks by the introduction of another king; King Ahab. 16:30 tells us that he did evil more than all others. V.31 reveals that King Ahab thought it was trivial to

simply blend pagan worship with the true worship of Yahweh. He wanted more. And so, in vv.31-33 we see him married to a pagan named Jezebel whose father was Ethbaal whose name meant “Baal lives”!

The point of the narrative is to demonstrate how far Israel had fallen...fallen from the days of Joshua, fallen into the grip of Ahab the idolatrous worshipper. These were ominous times!

What will the LORD say and do in response to sin?

When we read verse one, it ought not to surprise us to hear the inauguration of a curse. This curse was known as the Covenant curse as found in the law of Deuteronomy. In chapter 28 Moses lists the consequences of not obeying the voice of the Lord. “Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them” (Deut.27:26; Gal.3:10) One of the curses found in Deut.28:23 says, “And the heavens over your head shall be bronze and the earth under you shall be iron”. This is what we find in 1Kings 17:1; the covenant curse.

The Lord withholds rain from them to demonstrate that the Israelites are under God’s curse. God’s people must understand what condition they are in. Jehovah-Jireh; the Lord provides is seen as a bearer of bad news. There is curse and not blessing upon the people. They are in an awful status of under the wrath of God (cf. John 3:36; Rom.1:18ff).

as a bearer of the curse

Vv.2-6

But then something strange happens in vv.2-6. The LORD commands Elijah to go east to the brook of Cherith and be fed by ravens. What does all this mean?

Goes East

Elijah is told to go east. Go east out of the Promised Land. Go east as did Adam and Eve when banished from the Garden, when placed under the curse. Go east like the exiles we see in the Old Testament. When a geographical movement toward the east happens in the Bible generally we are looking at judgment. Commanded to go east commonly refers to the curse due to sin.

To Cherith

We know we are on to this theme when we see where Elijah was to go. To the brook of Cherith which means “cut off”. Elijah was to be *as though* he were driven out of the promised land and cut off from the blessing of the Lord (see Isa.53:8).

With Ravens

Lastly, we take note of what fed Elijah. Ravens were commanded to feed meat to Elijah. Ravens, you may recall, were “unclean” birds according to the Law.

What does all this imagery suggest? What does the Lord want us to see in these details? Driven eastward to a place called “cut off” and associated with “uncleanness” points us to a theme. Elijah who was not under the covenant curse submitting to the covenant curse in order to bear the curse for all who had fallen into sin; into false worship and idolatry. Does this picture suggest anything to you?

The first thing we are to see in this passage is Jehovah-Jireh; the LORD provides. He provides by sending to all the message of bad news that all who sin are under the curse. And then we are to see the LORD providing by calling Someone who was not under the curse to submit to the curse and bear the curse for those who had sinned by turning from the living God and participating in false worship and idolatry.

Can you see who I see in this passage? In Galatians 3:10,13 we read “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse...Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...” Elijah here pictures the Great Elijah; Jesus Christ who was to come and pronounce the holy curse hanging over all sin. The Bible tells us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Sin is not a small thing. Sin is a failure to recognize and relish the infinite worth of the holiness of God. Sin is a willful disregard of God’s commands. Sin prefers other things or people over the LORD. Sin does not submit to the King of the Universe. Sin defames God’s glory and destroys human gladness. Sin is not trivial – it is treason.

Therefore, the justice of God cannot and will not sweep these crimes under the rug of indifference. The Bible says, “The soul who sins shall die” (Eze.18:4). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom.6:23). There is a price to pay. The price is dreadful; a conscious experience of the eternal curse of the wrath of God in hell without exit & with absolute pain and no pause.

Left here there is no good news. God’s wrath pours out on all of us. But this is not the end of the story. The love of God does not rest with the curse that hangs over all sinful humanity. He did something about it that we can not do for ourselves.

God sent his own Son into this world to absorb his wrath and bear the curse on the Cross for all who trust Him. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Gal.3:13).

So where does that leave you?

Conclusion

as a bearer of Good News

Vv.7-16

I will conclude this message by preaching personally to us vv.7-16. Notice in these verses what the LORD does with this message. We see the LORD as the provider not merely by pronouncing judgment nor by sending Jesus to take the judgment for sinners. We see Jehovah-Jireh as the provider by bringing this message to people personally and calling each of us to respond personally. He is a bearer of Good News as observed in vv.7-16

Goes to Zarephath

7-16

Elijah is told to go to Zarephath which belonged to Sidon.

To a place**Vv.7-10a**

God commands Elijah to go to the land of Baal worship. If Ahab wants to bring Baal into Israel, the LORD will send his servant out of the land and into Baal worshippers. If the king of Israel wants to marry the daughter of the king of Sidon and bring idolatry into the land, the LORD will send the servant of God to a Gentile widow (see Lk.4:25f) under the king of Sidon in order to grace her. Oh, see the beautiful picture presented here for us!

To a person**Vv.10b-16**

The gospel never goes merely to a place. The gospel always has a personal focus. And this is precisely what we find in vv.10b-16.

Here we see the recipient of the gospel and her two responses.

Her Condition**vv.10b-12**

In verse 12 we see a starving, withered widow picking up sticks. She is dying along with her son. She only knows but one thing to do; that is to try to care for herself and son by relying upon herself. Her resources are little.

The picture we see in v.12 is similar to the picture we see in a letter from Peter Coombs, a British soldier dated May 4, 1945 as he described the horrors of a Nazi camp. He looked upon the dread and said, "They are...dying now at the rate of three hundred a day. They must die and nothing can save them - their end is inescapable, they are too far gone now to be brought back to life. I saw their corpses lying near their shovels, for they crawl or totter out into the sunlight to die. I watched them make their last feeble journeys, and even as I watched they died." (quote taken from www.scrapbookpages.com/BergenBelgen)

V.12 says that this widow has nothing baked, a handful of flour, a little oil and that she is gathering a couple of sticks. She attempts to provide the last meal she will ever eat for her son and herself using her emaciated arms and hands. She sees no hope with her sunken eyes. She does see how the LORD is Elijah's hope. The Lord is alive. But for her, the message "Yahweh lives" makes no difference for her and her son.

His Call**Vv.13-14**

What will it take for her and her son to live? How will the Lord's provision of life in the midst of death benefit her family? In vv.13-14 we see Elijah's call. He says something to her that will not make sense to us apart from understanding the gospel call. He looks at her and requests of her food and water before she gets food and water for her family. She is down to her last meal. She is grieving over her son's imminent death. She is preparing to embrace her son and then die together. And he says, "Look at me and feed me first".

This appears so strange. Who is this Israelite? I thought the Lord cared for widows and orphans. I thought a servant of the Lord was to be caring and com-

passionate. This appears so selfish, unloving, uncaring. This looks utterly self-preoccupied and self-centered. What is Elijah doing in these verses?

Elijah is forcing the issues of life and death. He is pressing this hopeless, emaciated, vulnerable lady to ask the question we all must ask ourselves. “To whom will I look for life”? If I look to myself for the sustenance to live I will die. But if I look away from myself and to Jehovah-Jireh; the Lord provides...I will live!

Her Choice

Vv.15-16

What does she end up doing? Her choice is seen in vv.15-16. She obeys. She believes that the LORD has all she needs for life and godliness. She turns from trying to live apart from the LORD. And she trusts in Him. And the scene ends with these words. “She and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

Life was received through faith that obeys.

Lessons

- 1Kings 17:1-16 is a story of redemption—The curse-bearer taking the covenant blessing to Gentiles to give life amid death.
- It starts with bad news (v.1).
- It continues with the curse-bearer who is Jesus Christ (vv.2-6)
- Who was rejected by the Jews and went to the Gentiles (vv.7-11)
- Who comes to them and finds them relying upon themselves for life (vv.12-14).
- Who finds them dying a horrible death (v.12b).
- Who commands them to look outside themselves to Him for life (vv.13-14).
- Who causes them to turn to Him and live (vv.15-16; see v.9)

Do you sense the LORD’s command upon your life today?

Jehovah-Jireh means The LORD foresees our need and provides for it.

Do you believe this? Do you see your spiritual need? Do you understand how He has provided for this need? Do you trust Him for it?

Turn today from your own efforts to make life work apart from the LORD. Trust Him today for your salvation. Trust Him today and live!