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Sunday School Lesson

By R. A. C. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

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LESSON FOR JANUARY 8

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE.

LESSON TEXT—I Kings 17:1-24.

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

REFERENCE MATERIAL—Ex. 16; I Kings 16:29-33; Matt. 6:19-34.

PRIMARY TOPIC—God Cares for Elijah.

JUNIOR TOPIC — Elijah, the Brave Prophet.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC —Jehovah's Champion Preserved.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC —Obeying the Word of Jehovah.

I. Elijah's Message to Ahab (v. 1). This was a startling message, for Ahab had not only led Israel into idolatry, but into a repudiation of the living God.

1. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth." Elijah knew the source of his message. He knew that he represented the living God, therefore had no fear to come into the presence of the king in His name.

2. "Before whom I stand." Because Elijah stood before God, he could stand before Ahab. His "standing" before God indicates his constant readiness to go on His errands.

3. "There shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word." This suspension of moisture continued for three and a half years (Jas. 5:17), and was given in answer to Elijah's prayer (Jas. 5:17). Drouth was predicted as the punishment for idolatry (Deut. 11:16, 17), and the prophet was now applying the divine judgment.

II. Elijah's Retirement (vv. 2-16). As soon as he had delivered his message he retired from the king's sight, while the penalty of the king's sin should be visited upon the land. When the famine was sore in the land, the king sought east and west, north and south for Elijah, but God had concealed him. Those who speak God's message frequently seek solitude when the message is delivered.

1. By the brook Cherith (vv. 2-7). (1) Drinking of the brook (vv. 4-6). While drinking of the literal waters of the brook, he was being nourished by the Living Waters from the throne of God. From day to day Elijah's faith was tested as he saw the stream run lower and lower as the drouth continued. (2) Fed by the ravens (vv. 4-6). The ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening. Elijah thus enjoyed two meals each day, with water to drink. The same God who sustained Elijah, still lives, and we should trust Him for our daily bread. At last the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land. The Lord then instructed him to move.

2. At Zarephath (vv. 8-16). (1) The place (v. 9). Zarephath was at the west side of Palestine, near the Mediterranean sea, in Gentile territory. In order to reach this place Elijah had to cross the country from the Jordan to the sea. Zarephath was only a few miles from the home of Jezebel's father. This, no doubt, was a trial to Elijah. (2) Sustained by a widow (vv. 10-12). "Bring a little water and a morsel of bread," was the request which he made of the widow. This, no doubt, was a great trial to her, but God had touched her heart and stirred up faith in her. Her reply reveals her deep distress. (3) Elijah's reply (v. 13). This made plain to her that it was a case of mutual interest to do as the Prophet said: "The barrel of meal shall not waste; neither shall the cruse of oil fail." (4) The widow's obedience (v. 15). "She did according to the sayings of Elijah, and she and her house did eat many days." (5) God keeps His word (v. 16). May we learn from this lesson:

1. The particularity of God's providence. Truly a sparrow shall not fall to the ground without our Father. By the prearrangements of God all our needs are daily met. There is no happen so in God's providence. The woman of Zarephath, going out to gather sticks to prepare the last meal, met Elijah, and is helped for two years.

2. No matter how small our resources, we can do something for God if we will. The lad with the five barley loaves and the two small fishes, with the blessing of the Lord, did a great work.

3. Our concern should be to work for others and for God before ourselves. We should give our all to God and trust Him for further supply.

4. God often allows us to get down to our very last in order to teach us that all is from Him.

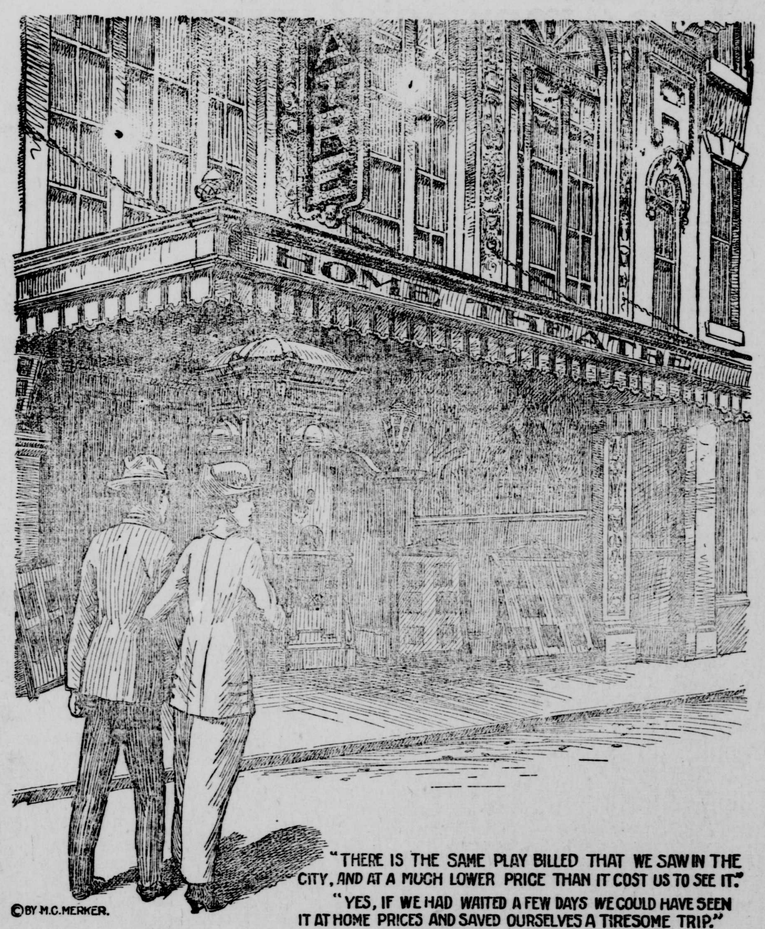
5. God's dealing with this Gentile woman is a foregleam of His dealing with the Gentile nations.

The Cheerful Worker.

Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shall shine as lights in the world.—Philippians 2:14 to 16.

A Great Reward.

I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.—II Timothy 4:7 and 8.



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