Study of Elijah - Part 2

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth Stewart

[0:00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, we'll turn again to the first book of Kings and chapter 17.

And we'll read again at verse 2, chapter 17, at verse 2.
And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan.
And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord, for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan.
And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook. Verse 3, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith.
[1:27] Now last week we saw the remarkable decline in the spiritual life of the kingdom of Israel.

Ever since the days of Jeroboam, the first king, Israel, went on a downward course, which headed rapidly into religious apostasy.
And before long, well, within the space of 60 years, Israel had slidden into a state of immorality and paganism. And the whole nation was given over to fleshly indulgence, and that was covered by some kind of pagan religion, the worship of Ashtera and the worship of Baal, both pagan gods and goddesses of fertility.
And I just touched on the relevance of that to ourselves last week, but it's well worth emphasizing that every time you see a nation turn away from the Lord and slide into immorality, you also see a rise in paganism and in superstition.
And that is a remarkable thing, and perhaps you wouldn't have tied the two things together, but it's interesting even in our own lifetime today that we see again a descent into immorality of all kinds, and at the same time a rise in paganism and in superstition.
[2:58] The new age is flowering. The mystery religions of the East are flowering. And as people are descending into a moral abyss, at the same time they are embracing these foolish vanities, these religions of the East.

And it's a kind of sop to the conscience. People always want a sop to the conscience. Whenever you depart from the Lord, there will be some kind of minister of peace to your own conscience. You will create him and fashion him for yourself. Something to give you some kind of peace, and that is the way these people were. They had a veneer of religion which covered their slide into immorality.
And that slide we saw last week was begun by King Jeroboam. And it's interesting that he did it by perverting the church. He perverted the worship of the church.
And he set up two calves. Now these calves, by the way, were not meant to be viewed as some kind of false gods. Those calves were meant to be viewed as Jehovah.
[4:00] The people were meant to worship Jehovah through the image of the calves. And it's always by a subtle perversion of the truth that the error finds its way into the church.

It was that simple. Let's just have a visible representation of God. And with that, the whole thing slid down into the abyss that we see here in the days of Ahab.
Ahab was the seventh king. He reigned 22 years. And by his time, Israel, like himself, had sold itself to work iniquity. And that's why it's the church's first duty always to promote, to proclaim the truth. It is the pillar and ground of the truth. The truth of God comes first. Now at this time, we saw that the Lord raised up Elijah, the Tishbite, from Gilead.
And he raised him up as a standard to defend his own cause and to preach the gospel of God. And Elijah did that. He was a man of prayer and obedience.

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[5:05] And the Lord sent him into the presence of Ahab and Jezebel. And I'm sure he spoke more than what we have recorded in verse 1 of chapter 17.

He said to them, As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. It's not difficult to believe that he spoke more than that. That he rebuked the king and the queen. That he addressed them vividly and he addressed them starkly. Not like other prophets of God who tremble when they go before important people.
I remember seeing that a few months back when some so-called outstanding evangelical leaders were going to see President Clinton and tell him what was wrong with the nation. And they ended up essentially fraternizing with him and telling him that everything was all right.
Some people crumble in the presence of dignitaries. I sometimes wonder if our own address to the queen is as sharp and as pointed as it ought to be. The prophet of God ought to preach to the state.
[6:04] It ought to preach to society, to kings and to subjects. Everyone. The church should preach to everyone, everywhere about what God requires. Not flattering, not fawning, but telling the truth and telling the truth as it is.

Now it required great courage for Elijah to stand before a persecuting king and queen and tell them what was what. But he did that. He did that. He did that. And his parting shot to them was that there will be no rain and no dew on the ground until I give the word.
And that was a message from the Lord, from a messenger of the Lord. Now we saw the key to that strength. That strength is only attained in one way.
And the New Testament gave us that key and we saw it last week. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah was a man of like passions as we are. And yet he prayed that it might not rain.
And for the space of three years and six months it did not rain upon the earth. That was the key. He prayed. He knew fellowship with God. And at the same time he was obedient to God.
[7:16] He had respect to the law and to the commandments. And because of that the Lord used him mightily. And significantly, and let me emphasize this to you again, in the New Testament, that is not a message for preachers.

Certainly not for preachers alone. It is a message for the whole church. The way that James gives it in chapter 5. That every single man, woman and child who believes in the Lord should be strong and do exploits.
And have the faith of Elijah. For the same tools are in your hand. And the Lord puts them in your hand. Pray and keep my law. And the Lord will use you.
If you are indeed living in that kind of way. Now sure enough, the drought begins. The sun shines and the earth begins to be scorched.
The ground cracks. The animals begin to thirst. The people begin to thirst. And Ahab knows who is responsible. Well in a sense he does. He's responsible himself.
[8:19] But as far as he's concerned, Elijah is responsible. And he begins to hunt up and down the land to get a hold of this man Elijah who has disappeared. North and south he and Jezebel sends messengers to find the man.

Because they believe he is the root of the trouble. Elijah himself shares in the affliction that he brought down upon the world. He prayed that it might not rain and it did not rain.
And he hungers and he begins to fill the pangs of the famine himself. But he waits until God tells him to move. And sure enough, the Lord comes and tells him to move.
In verse 2, And the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan.
And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook. And I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. Now Cherith was a small, insignificant, obscure tributary of Jordan.
[9:24] Jordan was the main river running north to south in the Promised Land. Until it went into the Dead Sea. The Cherith was a tributary. One of the small brooks that connected or that flowed into the main river Jordan.

And it lay to the east of the Jordan. And Elijah was told to go to that obscure place and to hide himself there. And God had prepared something for him there.
He prepared the brook Cherith. And he prepared and commanded ravens to come to him and to supply him with bread and with flesh every morning and every evening.

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And this begins a period of three and a half years where Elijah is invisible in the land of promise. He is gone.
The Lord takes him to a small, secluded place. And he takes him there for a particular purpose. He will feed him there. And he will show him great things there.
[10:26] It's interesting in Revelation 12 that the church of Christ is persecuted by the dragon. The woman brings forth the man-child. And the dragon is persecuting that man-child.

No, the dragon persecutes the woman. And the woman, we are told, runs into the wilderness. Where she is nourished by God for 42 months. 1260 days.
42 months. Which you'll notice is three and a half years. There is an obvious parallel between that and Elijah's experience. The church of God goes out into the wilderness to be fed by God.
So Elijah goes out here on his own to Cherith to be fed by God. And to see God's hand in a remarkable way in providence and kindness and in mercy.
And he learns many things by the brook of Cherith. Cherith. Now, although it was for his own safekeeping. And although it was a mercy for him to go there.
[11:30] There was a trial in it as well. There was a trial inside it as well. It was no small thing for Elijah to go to turn eastward. And to go beside the brook Cherith.

Why shouldn't Cherith dry like every other small brook? Or what of the raven? The raven. That bird that feeds on carrion.
The bird that is so greedy that it will feed itself and let its own young starve. Elijah is required to believe that that bird will come twice a day.
And will carry him bread and flesh for him to eat morning and evening. And he's required to go to a place of utter loneliness. He'll be beside Cherith for a year.
He'll be on his own beside the brook. No one to talk to. No one to see. No one. No man like himself. Of like passion as himself to have fellowship with.
[12:28] Nothing. Solitude. Quietness. For a whole year. Believing he will be fed by the ravens. And by one brook which will mysteriously not dry in the providence of God.

But as is always true of Elijah. Elijah goes. God says get thee hence. And it's written of Elijah. So he went. And did according to the word of the Lord.
And the obedience of Elijah is a remarkable thing. And let me say this to you my friend. Whenever the Lord asks you to do something. Do it. And do it alone.
Do it unquestioningly. And do it unreservedly. Never go beyond what God says to you at any point. And says what will happen afterwards. Never mind about the fallout.
Never mind consequences. Leave things like that to the Lord. You just do what the Lord requires of you at any given time. Some people will say.
[13:31] But if I do this. What's going to follow? What if Elijah. Suppose Elijah had prayed for the earth. Not to give any rain or dew. Or suppose before he prayed it.

He had said. Well what will happen if a famine comes? What will happen to me if a famine comes? If he knew that he was going to hide beside the brook Cherith for a whole year on his own.
He might not perhaps have prayed it so earnestly. But Elijah does what lies to hand. He asks what dost thou require of me? And he does it. And he obeys step by step.
Now. You and I must follow that. Obey God step by step. Do what's right. Always. Never try to be a politician. And say.
But that's the fallout. Just do what's right. Do what's right. And the Lord will bless that. And he will honor it. And he will guide you step by step. So Elijah prays for the famine first.
[14:28] And then when he hears. Go beside Cherith. He goes. And he hides himself beside the Cherith. Now I want to look with you. At this seclusion. Beside the brook of Cherith.

We'll look at it. We'll learn from it. What is the Lord saying in it? What is his message to yourself in it? What are we supposed to glean from the sojourn of the prophet?
Beside this brook. And of course the obvious question is. Why was he sent there? And you may say. Well that is straightforward.
We are told. We are told. That he was to hide himself. Verse 3. By the brook Cherith. In other words. He's to hide. From the fierce. Persecuting nature.
Of Ahab. And especially. Of Jezebel. Well that's fair enough. As far as it goes. But it doesn't go far enough. The fact of the matter is.

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[15:24] That there is more. To the hiding. Beside the Cherith. Than just that. And I want to look. With you. At hiding beside the Cherith. As.

Two kinds of message. First of all. It is a message to Israel. And secondly. There is a message in it. To Elijah.
Himself. Elijah beside the Cherith. Has a message to Israel. And it has a message. To Elijah. Himself.
Now. First of all. A message to Israel. And what a solemn. Message. It is. And the message. Can be gleaned. From this single fact.
Once Elijah. Had gone. East of the Jordan. To the brook Cherith. There was not. One. Single. Prophet. Of God.
[16:19] Left. In Israel. Not. One. Or. Shall we say. There is not. One. Left. In Israel. Whom the people. Could hear.

And whom the people. Could receive. The word of God. From. A hundred. Were left living. Hidden. But they were hidden. In limestone caves. The Lord. Had removed them.
Obadiah. And he is an interesting man. He was the. Chief servant. Of the king. He had taken a hundred. Of God's prophets. And he had hidden them. In the limestone caves.
In Carmel. We are told that. In chapter 18. And verse 3. And Ahab called Obadiah. Which was the governor. Of his house. Now Obadiah.
Feared the Lord. Greatly. For it was so. When Jezebel. Cut off the prophets. Of the Lord. That Obadiah. Took a hundred prophets. And hid them. By fifty. In a cave.
[17:14] And fed them. With bread and water. So these hundred. Were removed. By God. In his providence. And hidden. In a cave. Fed by this man. With bread and water.

And once Elijah. Was removed. From the court. Of the king. Once he was removed. From the presence. Of the people. And once he was put. In solitude. By the charis. With the word. Of the Lord.
You could say. Disappeared. From the land. There was no prophet left. Sent by God. And anointed by God. To preach the gospel. And to preach it.
To the men. And to the women. No one. They were all gone. And the last of them. Had been taken away. And what does that leave you with? Well it leaves you with.
The most awful kind of famine. That you can imagine. And that's not the famine of bread. And it's not a famine of water. But it is the famine of the word of the Lord.
[18:09] Which is the worst famine. That a people can have. When God takes away. His own word. And when he takes away the proclamation.

Of the gospel. Now I mean that. That is worse. Than no rain. And no dew. It is worse. Than starving. It is worse.
Than a dry parched land. When the Lord removes. His preachers. And his prophets. Out of the land. Let me bring a couple of texts before you.
Just to prove. That first of all in Isaiah. And in the 30th chapter. Now this speaks of a calamity. That God is bringing on the land. But you'll notice something about this calamity.
This is Isaiah chapter 30. And verse 20. Now listen carefully to this. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity. And the water of affliction.
[19:10] Yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner. And when you turn to the left. Now do you notice that? It is God's blessing upon a people.

If he sends them adversity and affliction. If in the midst of that. He still retains. The preaching of the gospel. From himself. Inspired and energized by himself.
That is a mark. That God is still with that people. It's a mark that God is still with that people. Though you have the bread of adversity. Yet shall not thy teachers.
Be moved into a corner anymore. And again let me bring before you the words that we read. From Amos. Chapter 8.
Behold the days come saith the Lord. That I will send a famine in the land. Not a famine of bread. Nor a thirst for water. But of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea.
[20:12] And from the north even to the east. They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord. And shall not find it. Now what a terrible thing that is.

What a terrible thing that is. When the Lord removes his word from a people. And I would assert. And I feel confident in asserting it.

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That the Lord for many years. Has been removing his word. From our own nation. And from our own islands. He has been removing his words.
And there is a progressive famine. Of the word of God in the land. Now you might not like that. And you may think it should not be said.
Yes we have thousands of meetings all right. There have never been so many books. Pouring in multitudes of the Christian presses. I grant you that as well. There have never been so many religious magazines.
[21:12] And so many religious periodicals. For the old and for the young. And for the middle aged. And for every single special group. And every single special category of person. That you could care to name. Never so many.

Never so many meetings. Never so many conferences. Never so many speakers. Never so many Bibles. Produced. Multiplied. Distributed. Published. But yet I tell you.
That in spite of that. The Lord is sending. A famine. Of his word upon the land. And what I mean by that. Is simply this. That the Lord is withdrawing. The preaching of the gospel.
The preaching of the gospel. Is becoming more blunt. It's becoming less blunt. I should say. It's becoming less open. It's becoming less forthright. It's more hidden. It's more veiled.
It's more obscured. It's being delivered. In a more timid manner. Respect is had unto men. Respect is not had unto God. The rough edges. Are being taken away.
[22:08] From the gospel. Is that not a fact? Is the gospel preached. With the same power. With the same vitality. With the same urgency. Do you think the word of God. Is being proclaimed.

As though people believed it anymore. When I say a famine. Of the word of God. What I mean is a famine. Of the true word of God. Of the real.
Vibrant. Living. Preaching. Of the gospel. That is the kind of famine. That I'm talking about. And don't the children of God. Know that? In fact. I venture to say. That the unconverted people.
Know that as well. I venture to say. That anyone. With a spark. Left in their conscience. Knows. That what I'm saying. Is the truth. That God is withdrawing. These things.
And has been for many years. From our midst. And these things. Ought to shake us. And they ought to make us pray. And they ought. To make us repent.
[23:02] Some time ago. I thought that. The whole situation. Is rather like the situation. Of Coleridge. That he describes. In that famous poetry. The rhyme of the ancient mariner. Where the mariner.

Is parched. Looking for a drop of water. To drink. And all around him. There is the salty ocean. And he cries. Water. Water. Everywhere. He says. And not a drop to drink.
That is the way it is today. There is a proliferation. Of religious things. But. The taste is different. It's not the fresh. Clear.
Cold. Grass of water. From a far country. That refreshes. The needy soul. It's something. That leaves you as empty. Leaving it. As you are going to it.
In fact. Perhaps like salt water. It leaves you even more thirsty. Than you were. Before you heard it. That is what happens. When the Lord is removing.
[23:55] His spirit. Removing his presence. And removing his influence. And the last thing. That you or I should think. Is that we are exempt from it. And there is nothing as disastrous.

In the life of an individual. Or a church. As to think that we are beyond. Anything like that. The spirit of. Oh that can never happen to us. Is the very beginning.
Of the thing. Or can I say. It's one of the biggest symptoms. Of the thing happening. And one of the saddest things. Is when. People don't seem to realize. That these things are true at all.
What can you say to that? What shall we say to these things? What can you say to that? As the Lord said. Through Jeremiah. He says. The prophets prophesy falsely. And the priests rule.
By their means. And. Lo and behold. My people love to have it so. My people love to have it so. What do you make of that? What do you make of that?
[24:53] Other than that. The discernment goes. It goes. And at the end of the day. People are insensible. Whether they're hearing the truth. Or a lie. It's all one.

And the same. Child of God. Whoever you are. If that worries you. Whether you're professing or not. Go to the Lord. And take it to the Lord in prayer.
And ask him to remember us. By sending us his word. His word. Which will come from himself. Through his own people. And which will live.

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Live. Not fall dead. Upon your ears. So that is the famine. Of the word. Of God. God. And I'm quite sure. That. When.
People. Cease to discern the truth. They swallow a delusion. God sends a strong delusion. That they should believe. A lie. And the fact of the matter. With Israel.
[25:47] Was. That they stopped valuing the word. And when they stopped valuing it. They stopped receiving it. That follows. That stands to reason. They didn't appreciate it. And the Lord withdrew it.

Oh let us value. Everything. That the Lord gives us. Let's value it. Let's love his word. Let's love. The preaching of the truth. Let's love his people.
Let's love the Sabbath day. Not like the people in chapter 8. Saying when will the Sabbath be over. So that we might trade. Let's love it. Let's love it all. In case we lose it all.
In case we lose it all. And you my friend. As an individual here. You might be despising. The very word of God. That I'm saying. You might be despising. The word that I'm bringing you.
Well let me tell you this. That. In Amos chapter 8. You have a picture. Of a famine of the word. And that famine. So working in some people.
[26:47] That they know. In the judgment of God. That they must hear it. And that they must find it. But for some people. They will never find that word.

They'll never find it. If you despise it. When it's there. You might never find it. When you need it. Saul heard a lot of preaching. And if there's one. Frightening individual.
In the Bible. It is King Saul. The first king of Israel. He heard a lot. He saw a lot. And God blessed him with a lot. But he didn't use profitably. Anything he had.
But the day came. In Saul's life. When he desperately. Wanted to hear a word from God. Just one word. And he sought for the Lord. And he sought for a word. But his heart was still given over.
To sinfulness. So he did not find it. God ceased to speak to Saul. And in the end. That poor man. Ended up in the wretchedness. Of consulting the witch of Endor. That was it.
[27:41] He ran to something. That would give him. A word. From beyond. Use the word. While you have it. In case you lose it. And in case you never. Find it.

Again. Now that's why I say. That taking Elijah to Cherith. Was a terrible message. To Israel. What they did with it. We'll see. They had three years.
And we'll see. How they responded. To the barrenness. Not just physical. But spiritual barrenness. That the Lord sent to them. Now in the second place.
There was a message. At Cherith. For Elijah. Himself. Because Elijah. Was taken to Cherith. For a reason. For his own soul.
We speak of. Sometimes of killing. Two birds. With one stone. Well. The Lord does that. All the time. Every single act. That the Lord. Does. Is designed. To fulfill. Many different ends.
[28:38] The Lord. Does one small. Insignificant act. To us. Or a no estimation. But in reality. He is achieving. A multitude of purposes. He is able. To kill two birds.

With one stone. As it were. Many times over. He brings Elijah. To Cherith. For Israel. But also. For himself. Because he desires. Elijah. To go into.
The wilderness. Now my friend. Whenever God. Wishes to speak. To us all. He chooses. The wilderness. As the place. In which he speaks.
God speaks. Loud. In the wilderness. God speaks. Loud. In solitude. And when God. Is really striving. With your soul. Or when he's about to do it.
He finds some way. Of taking you. Out of the crowd. And of putting you. On your own. Spiritually I mean. Perhaps physically also. It may be. A period of desperate.
[29:34] Loneliness. That comes into your life. Maybe you are suddenly. Rejected by people. You could be rejected. By your friends. Even at school. Or in your workplace. Or something. But the Lord takes a person.

To the side. When he begins to work. He takes the people. Into the wilderness. To speak peaceably. Or to speak. Unto their souls. It could be a bereavement.
In your family. It could be financial hardship. Or something of that kind. That isolates you. Puts you to the side. And then the Lord. Begins to speak. In that situation.
And it's in the wilderness. That the real lessons. Of the spiritual life. Are learned. It's in the wilderness. That God converts souls. My friend. When God is converting a soul.

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That soul feels. That there's no one else. In the world. Save themselves. God. Speaks to you. Individually. He speaks to you. In solitude. He speaks to you.
[30:30] In the watches of the night. That is where God works. That is his school. That is the university. That is the place of discipline. It is on your own. Ask Moses.

You go to Moses. And say. Moses. Where did you learn. The most important lessons. Of your life. And he will tell you. I learned them. At the back side of the desert. When I was 40 years in Midian. That is where I learned.
The most important lessons. Of my life. Or you could ask Elijah. Where did you learn. The important lessons. And he would say. Well I learned them. In the wilderness of Gilead. And I learned them. Beside the brook Cherith. That is where God. Spoke to my soul. Ask the Baptist. The fiery John the Baptist. The New Testament Elijah. Ask him. John. Where did you learn.
All that you learned. And he would tell you. I learned it in the wilderness. I learned it on my own. With God. I learned it. Face to face. With the Almighty. In solitude.
[31:26] That is where I learned it. Ask John the Apostle. Where did you glean your wisdom. Ask John the Apostle. What made him great. And if he were to reply. To such a question.

As that. He would say. On Patmos. In isolation. In the exile. Of Domitian the Emperor. Or I would say. Of Nero the Emperor. There I learned. In Patmos.
Ask Paul. Paul. Where did you learn. Where did you grow. Where did the Lord speak to you. Where did he visit you. And he would say. In three years. In Arabia. That is where the Lord spoke to me. That is where the Lord drew near to me. Nobody knows. Anything about that in Paul's life. In fact. Maybe some of you have heard it tonight. For the first time. That before Paul did anything.
He was three years in Arabia. In the wilderness. On his own. On his own. What was he doing there? What was he doing there?
[32:23] Well it's rather a case of what the Lord was doing. With him there. It's in solitude. That you are forged. Your spiritual character. Your spiritual life. And your spiritual strength.

Is all forged. In a wilderness. And God knows. How to take you there. He knows it. And he knows when you need it. And let me say.
That if you don't make a chariot for yourself. God will make a chariot for you. If you neglect. Your secret place. And a place of solitude. God will forge out.
A place of solitude for you. He knows. How to take you to the side. And how to speak. To your soul. And that is where you learn the lessons. That really matter.
You learn them. In the wilderness. In the wilderness. I'll say a little more about that. As we go on. Now. The first thing he learned at Cherith.
[33:23] Was the great. Can we call it art. Or spiritual art. Of prayer. And of meditation. Now I don't say that Elijah didn't know that.

I know he knew. How to pray. And he knew. How to meditate. It. But the fact of the matter is. That we always need.
To be reminded of it. And we always need. To continue in it. And that was. The great lesson. That Elijah was learning in Cherith.
That he must always. Depend upon God. And that without solitude. And without a time set aside. And without prayer and meditation. He is useless.
In the kingdom of God. Useless. In the kingdom of God. Now. If you. Or if I. Am useless. In the kingdom of God.
[34:21] The Lord will send a Cherith. And you ought to pray. That he send you a Cherith. Anything. But to be prayerless. And to be meditationless. And God takes care.

To bring his own vessels. Into that place. Where they are cast again. In full dependence. Upon himself. No reason for it. Just wait in a moment.
And we'll see. So he continued to learn. To pray. And to meditate. Secondly. He learned here. That God takes care of him. Now.
How does he learn that? Well. He learns it. Through the raven. And through. The brook. Now. I don't know. But that both of these. Are miraculous. I'm sure.
That one is anyway. The provision of the raven. Carrying the meat. Twice a day. In the morning. And in the evening. Is definitely. Miraculous. It's sufficient proof of that. That it's against the raven's own nature.

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[35:17] To do any such kind of thing. It is a definite. Miracle. By God. God. And some people translate this word. Arabians. That God fed him by Arabians. Because apparently.

The same word. Pointed. In the Hebrew. Slightly differently. Can mean. Arabians. Now. If anything. Is more artificial. And really plain stupid. It's. Than that.
I don't know what it is. It is obviously the word. Ravens. It's not Arabians. Which came and brought him. Food morning and evening. It is the raven. The raven. It is a miracle.
We don't apologize for miracles. The Lord is the God. Of the miracle. And I believe as well. That it's fairly likely. Although we shouldn't be dogmatic.
That the brook was also miraculous. As though the cherith. Perhaps was the only brook. That was left. From drying. That God preserved.
[36:10] And kept this brook. Longer than the rest. Because he was using it. To quench the thirst. Of his own profit. Now the great lesson.

From this. For Elijah. Is that whatever God. Asks you to do. Or wherever God. Asks you to go. God will feed you there. And God. Will keep you there.
God will feed you there. And God. Will keep you there. And how much more true. Is that. Of the bread of life. Which perisheth not. The meat. Which perisheth not.
And the water of life. Wherever God. Asks you to go. Or whatever God. Asks you to do. He will give you that. His word. Will be there. And you'll find that. It's there before you.
I have commanded. Notice. He doesn't say. I will. But I have. He says. It's all prepared. Do. What I ask you. And you'll find that. I've gone before you. And that is the Lord's way.
[37:07] Do what the Lord asks. And you'll find that. He's gone before you. His footsteps. Are never after you. His footsteps. Are in front of you. God always goes before you. And if you step out in obedience.

The Lord is there. He that doth in the secret place. Of the most high beside. Under the shade of him that is the almighty. Shall abide. There in Psalm 91. Read of. How you see his angels.
Being given charge over you. How the Lord keeps you. From trampling. From being trampled. By the lion. Or by the adder. God watches over you. And God keeps you.
And in the secret place. You see that. And in the place of obedience. You see that. And there is nothing. As glorious for the Christian. As to step out.
In obedience to God. However hard it is. To find that the Lord. Is there before you. Look again at Psalm 91. He will give his angels. Charge over you.
[38:02] To keep you. In all your ways. Now. The devil left out those words. When he was quoting the text. To the Savior. But those words are important.

He will give his angels. Charge over you. To keep you. In all your ways. You walk. In the ways. Of God. You walk.
In the paths. Of God. And you find that his. Footsteps. Are there. Before you. And. I don't know. But the harder the place. The more sweet the bread.
And the more refreshing. More cool. And the more clear. The water. And in connection. With that. Don't worry about the mana. You just worry about.
Following the pillar of cloud by day. And the pillar of fire by night. Because whatever the pillar is. There the mana falls. But if you go the opposite way. To the pillar.
[38:57] Don't expect the mana. If you're here telling me tonight. That your soul is starving. Well the first place to look for. When your soul is starving. Is to yourself.

That's the first place to look. Look to yourself. And ask yourself. Am I walking with the pillar of cloud. And am I walking with the pillar of fire. If you're not. Don't be surprised. That there's no mana on the ground.
The mana. Follows the pillar. I. He says. Have commanded the ravens. To feed thee there. Not anywhere else. Elijah could have chosen.
Any other brook. And there's no raven there. But if he goes there. He will find the Lord's preparation for him. Whatever God's asking you to do. God has prepared it.
And I say that to the person here. Who's not a Christian as well. The first great command. That the Lord is requiring of you. Is this. To take up your cross. And to follow him. If you're saying.
[39:54] Ah what if. But that. Or possibly this. Or maybe that. Forget the buts. And the possibles. And the maybes. It is what God asks. And God requires.

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And may God give you grace. To say that is enough. He'll go before me. And he'll look after. Every single situation. According to his wisdom. And I tell you my friend. He'll do that.
There is nothing of which. I'm as confident as that. That God will go before you. If you but hear him. And if you but listen. To what he asks of you. I have commanded the ravens.
To feed thee there. But you know. It's not just God's care of him. It's the extent of God's care of him. He feeds him. By means of a raven.
A raven. The unclean. Prohibited bird. Of the Levitical law. Is the one chosen. To carry the bread. And the flesh. To Elijah. Morning and evening.
[40:51] When something like that. Comes up in the Bible. You've got to ask. Well why is that so? And of course. Some people say. Well you shouldn't ask questions. Like that. It's only because it's a bird. Well.

That kind of examination. Will get you nowhere. If God chooses. The unclean bird. To carry the bread. And the flesh. To Elijah. There's a reason for it. There's a message.
In that to Elijah. And there's a message. In it to ourselves. What is the message? Well the message. Is simply this. That all things.
Are in his power. All things. Are in his control. And connected with that. That all things. Work together. For good. To those who are the called.
According to his purpose. All things. Even hard. Providences. Even the sicknesses. Even the financial hardships.
[41:48] Even the loneliness. And let me say. Even your persecutors. All work together. For good. If you love. The Lord.

Can I perhaps. Put it this way. Who is blacker. Than Satan himself. He's as black. As a raven. But what is Satan?
He is an angel. Fallen angel. He may be. But still an angel. And what is the definition. Of an angel. Well Hebrews chapter 1.
Tells us. Are they not all. Ministering spirits. Sent forth to minister. Unto them who shall be the heirs. Of salvation. In other words.
An angel is defined. As this spiritual. Messenger. From God. Who is sent. To serve. The people of God. And I tell you.
[42:43] That Satan. Belongs to that category. Now you may say. Well. You shouldn't put Satan. Into that category. Of the ministering spirit. Sent to minister. To the heirs of salvation.

And I ask you. Why not? Why are you not going to put him. Into that category? Is he a ministering spirit? Of course he is. Is he doing the will of God? Of course he is.
God lets him loose. As he pleases. And he does his own. Wicked work. As God pleases. And to accomplish. God's ends. Let me ask you. A stark question. Is it possible.
For Satan. To harm. God's work. In your soul. Did Satan harm Job? Did he harm Job? Are we not told.
At the end of the book of Job. That Job. Had twice as much. Of everything. As he had before. Satan doesn't like. The title. Of being a ministering spirit. Sent forth to minister.
[43:36] To the heirs of salvation. But the cap fits him. And he must wear it. He doesn't like the title. But it belongs to him. Because in the last analysis. He cannot but serve. The people of God.

That's not his motivation. That's not his desire. But that is what he accomplishes. And I'm sure. Child of God. That you can recall. Experiences in your own life.
When the raven came to you. And when the raven came to you. With bread. And with flesh. And God blessed you. Through a raven.
And God helped you. Through a raven. And there and then. You saw. That God moves heaven and earth. For his own church. Whom he loved. And for which he poured.
His own blood. When every single thing. Is subservient. To his will. And to his purpose. And. When you go next to your own cherith.
[44:32] And you should make your secret place. A cherith. If God. Isn't taking you. Particularly in providence. To a cherith. Your secret place. Should be a cherith. Next time you go to it. To pray and to meditate.

You think back. And I'm sure. You will see. That the raven himself. Has come to you. In one form or another. And he's given bread.

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And given flesh. To your soul. And then again. Not only does he see. God's care for him. He sees. The sheer. Power.
Of God. You imagine. Sitting beside. That brook. And I close. Really with this. Sitting beside. That brook. For a whole year.
Year. Day. After day. After day. With these messengers. Coming punctually. Dropping their riches. And this brook.
[45:29] Keeping. Ceaselessly. Its flow. And Elijah. Must have marveled. At the power. Of the God. Of heaven and earth. And when a person.

Sees that. And knows it. At the same time. He knows his own. Powerlessness. And his own. Insignificance. And Elijah. Learned that. In Cherith.
And that. Is a major lesson. Of the wilderness. Your own. Nothingness. That we are nothing. And that the Lord.
Himself. Is everything. And I say that. For this reason. If Elijah thought. That perhaps. He was an important man. Because he had stood. Before Ahab and Jezebel.
If he thought. That he perhaps. Was the man of the hour. Or that there was no one. Like himself. There is one way. To nip that. Right at its bud. There is one way. To stop that. Before it starts.
[46:25] And that's by taking. The man to Cherith. And after that. To take him. To the widow woman's house. For over two years. There. He's not at all. As it were. In the picture.

There. God tells him. You are nothing. I can use the ravens. To accomplish my will. I can use anything I wish. To bring my purposes to pass.
And Elijah. Is brought to know. His nothingness. At Cherith. And I wonder. My friends. If we were more often. At Cherith. More often.
In the place of prayer. And meditation. Would it show. More clearly. In our lives. The grace of humility. Commends itself. It commends itself.
And there is nothing. As paradoxical. Nothing as contradictory. As a professing person. Full of pride. And the Lord. Very often.
[47:22] Brings us to Cherith. To nip that. In the bud. Or to cut the flower. Of pride out. If it has began to appear. In the life. And one glance.

At these ravens. Tells Elijah. That really. He is insignificant. In everything. That is brought to pass. And what does all that do. For the man.
Well. What it all does. For him. Is what it will do. For yourself. A little while. At Cherith. And you are ready. To do something else. You cannot rush. From one work.
To another. Your great need. And perhaps the church. Is great need. And the great need. Of the hour. Is solitude. And the wilderness. To speak face to face. With God.
And quietness. That. Is what the Lord. Will use. And that is what the Lord. Will bless. He will never bless. A man. Who is full of himself. He will never bless. Self-sufficiency.
[48:17] He will never bless. The spirit of independence. But he will bless. All those. Who humble themselves. At the throne of grace. And say. Lord. Without thee. I am nothing. And once he's finished.

In Cherith. He can stand. At the top of Carmel. And he can confront. The 450 prophets. Of Baal. And he can summon. The fire of God. Down from heaven. Would that we could all. Do that.
That we could all. Do that. Let's go. To the place. The throne of grace. Where the Lord. Can indeed. Use us. Mightily. We'll see him.
Next week. As the brook. Dries up. God willing. And God. Tells him. To move on. To a widow woman. In Zarephath. May the Lord. Bless his world. To us. Eternal God.
We pray. That thou would. Draw near to us. And that thy spirit. Would move us. Into that place. Of solitude. And of quiet. That we might.
[49:18] Behold thy power. And thy tender love. And thy care. That we may see. Thy providence. Encircling us. Humble us.

At the throne of grace. Teach us. Our constant dependence. Upon thee. And that. Thou art able. To bring thine own purposes.
To pass. Using the most insignificant means. For as the ram's horn. Brought down the walls of Jericho. So Lord. Thou art able to use.
The feeble efforts. Of thine own people. To achieve great things. In the world. Dead. Strengthen us all. For Christ's sake. We pray. Amen.

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