

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Exodus to Exile -- Kings, Session 11, Elijah, the Widow of Zarephath, the Redemptive History, 1 Kings 17

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Exodus to Exile -- Kings, Session 11, Elijah, the Widow of Zarephath, the Redemptive History, 1 Kings 17, [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org), BeL

Dr. Vannoy's lecture focuses on the biblical narrative of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17, exploring themes of replacement theology. **The lecture** emphasizes that God's blessings and covenant can extend to those outside of Israel, as demonstrated by Elijah's ministry to the Sidonian widow. **It highlights** the significance of Elijah's relocation, God's promise to the widow, and the subsequent raising of her son. **The analysis** critiques approaches to biblical interpretation that focus solely on moral lessons or individual circumstances. **Instead, the discussion** emphasizes understanding the passage within the broader context of redemptive history and God's sovereign plan.

2. 10 - minute Audio Podcast Created based on

Dr. Vannoy, Exodus to Exile -- Kings, Session 11 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the [Biblicalelearning.org](https://www.biblicalelearning.org) [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Exodus to Exile).



**Vannoy_ExtoExileK_
Session 11.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Exodus to Exile -- Kings, Session 11, Elijah, the Widow of Zarephath, the Redemptive History, 1 Kings 17

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided lecture on 1 Kings 17, focusing on Elijah, the widow of Zarephath, and the concept of redemptive history:

Briefing Document: 1 Kings 17 – Elijah, the Widow of Zarephath, and Redemptive History

Main Theme: The "Principle of Replacement" in operation, as demonstrated through the narrative of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17:7-24. This principle involves God extending covenant obligations and privileges to those outside of Israel when Israel rejects His message.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Context:** The lecture analyzes 1 Kings 17:7-24, where Elijah is sent to Zarephath of Sidon to be sustained by a widow during a severe famine. Later, the widow's son dies, and Elijah raises him from the dead.
- **The Principle of Replacement:** This is the central theme.
- **Definition:** The idea that "the heathen will be called to the obligations and privileges of the covenant that the Jews reject." This is exemplified by Elijah being sent to a widow in Zarephath (a Gentile territory) instead of being supported by Israelites.
- **Jesus's Reference:** Jesus references this story in Luke 4:25-26, highlighting that the same principle of replacement would apply if the Israelites rejected His message.
- **"Now when Jesus sites that in Luke 4, he indicates that what happened in Elijah's time will happen again if God's people--the Israelites--reject his message."**
- **Elijah's Relocation:** The shift in Elijah's location from the Kerith Brook to Zarephath is significant.
- **Kerith Brook:** Previously, Elijah's concealment and sustenance by God (through ravens) demonstrated God's independence from the people of Israel and their dependence on His word. "God was isolating his people from the administration of his word."

- Zarephath: The relocation signifies that "the location of God's working through the administration of his word is also changed." God's focus is shifting to Zarephath and the widow. It's not *just* about God taking care of Elijah, but about the movement of redemptive history.
- Emphasis should not be solely on Elijah's circumstances or character, but on the broader context of God's redemptive work. The lecture critiques interpretations, like F.B. Meyer's, that focus primarily on individual lessons of faith and character development.
- "If the message is simply God cared for Elijah when the brook dried up then what you are doing is subordinating God's command to go to Zarephath to the flow of water in the stream."
- Zarephath's Significance: Zarephath belonged to Sidon, the city of Jezebel, who represented opposition to true faith in Israel. God intentionally sends Elijah to "the heart of the enemy," demonstrating that He can prepare a place for His word even in the midst of Satan's kingdom.
- "Elijah is told to go to the very place where the threat in Israel had originated... Sidon embodied the antithesis between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan at that particular time."
- **The Command and Promise to the Widow:**
 - The Widow's Situation: She is in dire straits due to the famine, with only enough food for one last meal for herself and her son.
 - Elijah's Demand: Elijah asks her to make him a cake first, which appears to be an unreasonable request, demanding the last of her food.
 - Not Just Imitation: This is not simply an example of someone to imitate. It's about the demand of God's word: The word of God demands one's entire life and all that a person has as well.
 - The Demand and Privilege: The demand is accompanied by a promise: "The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land." The widow is given the task of caring for Elijah.
 - Covenant Demand and Promise: "As Elijah brings the word of God to this woman, the covenant demand and the covenant promise have come into the life of this heathen woman."

- Her Faith and Obedience: The covenant blessing comes through her faith and obedience to Elijah's request. "She went away and did what Elijah had told her."
- **The Death and Resurrection of the Widow's Son:**
- Interpreting the Narrative: The lecture critiques interpretations that focus solely on moral lessons like contentment or gentleness. It advocates for understanding the event within the context of redemptive history. The death of the boy was a shock to both Elijah and the widow. The question is why?
- The Widow's Reaction: The widow connects her son's death to Elijah's presence, viewing it as punishment for her sin. "Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?" She feels betrayed because she was promised blessing.
- Elijah's Reaction: He questions God, asking why this tragedy has befallen the widow who has been obedient. He does not reply directly to her accusation but takes the boy to his room and prays.
- Prophetic Ministry to the Widow: The death of the child brings Elijah to the place where he must minister to the widow. Elijah intervenes through prayer, leading to the boy's resurrection.
- Shift in Focus: Previously, the narrative focused on Elijah, with the widow supporting him. Now, the focus shifts to the widow, and Elijah ministers to her needs.
- The Widow's Confession: After the resurrection, the widow proclaims, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth." This demonstrates the impact of Elijah's ministry and her growing faith in God's word.
- Weakness and Vindication: The incident reveals the woman's incomplete faith and drives Elijah to pray for the vindication of God's word.
- First Resurrection: The resurrection is the first instance of resurrection in Scripture and occurs not in Israel, but in Zarephath of Sidon.
- "The effect is clear through Elijah's ministry: The Lord chose himself to be the Almighty God; he is the one who kills and makes alive. He is the one who is holy but gracious; he is the one whose word is true and in which men can trust."
- **Theocentric vs. Anthropocentric Preaching:** The lecture touches on the difference between theocentric (God-centered) and anthropocentric (human-

centered) preaching. While anthropocentric preaching is easier to apply, theocentric preaching aims to exalt God and elicit worship.

Conclusion:

The story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17 is not just a tale of individual faith and provision, but a significant moment in redemptive history demonstrating God's principle of replacement. God extends His covenantal blessings beyond the borders of Israel to those who respond in faith and obedience, even in the heart of enemy territory. The widow's confession of faith after her son's resurrection underscores the power and truth of God's word. The significance can be seen in: Elijah's relocation, The command and promise given to the widow and The prophetic ministry of Elijah in the widow's life.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Exodus to Exile -- Kings, Session 11, Elijah, the Widow of Zarephath, the Redemptive History, 1 Kings 17

Study Guide: Elijah, the Widow of Zarephath, and Redemptive History (1 Kings 17)

I. Key Concepts and Themes:

- **The Principle of Replacement:** Understanding how God calls the heathen to the obligations and privileges of the covenant when His chosen people (Israel) reject His message. Consider its implications for both Elijah's time and later contexts, according to Jesus.
- **Redemptive-Historical Interpretation:** Analyzing the text not just for moral lessons or exemplary actions, but for its place within the unfolding story of God's redemption of humanity. Focus on how God's plan progresses through historical events.
- **Theocentric vs. Anthropocentric Preaching:** Grasp the difference between preaching that centers on God's character and actions (theocentric) and preaching that focuses primarily on human experience and application (anthropocentric). Understand the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
- **Covenant Demand and Promise:** Recognize the dual aspect of God's covenant relationship: the demands He makes on His people (obedience, faith) and the promises He offers in return (blessing, provision). Consider how these are manifested in the story of Elijah and the widow.
- **Significance of Location:** Appreciate the symbolic importance of places in the narrative, especially Zarephath of Sidon. Understand how location relates to God's redemptive purposes.

II. Detailed Outline and Study Questions:

A. Elijah's Relocation from the Kerith Brook to Zarephath (1 Kings 17:7-16)

- **Significance of the Brook Drying Up:** What was the revelatory significance of Elijah's concealment at Kerith?
- Why is it important that God sustained Elijah independently of the people of Israel?

- **God's Command to Go to Zarephath:**Why was it significant that God's word and administration shifted from Israel to Zarephath?
- How does focusing solely on Elijah's personal needs miss the larger point of the narrative?
- **Challenging Traditional Interpretations:**Why does the lecture critique F.B. Meyer's interpretation of Elijah's circumstances?
- What is wrong with emphasizing the widow's character as the sole reason for Elijah's visit?
- **Zarephath of Sidon:**Why is it important that Zarephath belonged to Sidon, the home of Jezebel?
- What does Sidon represent in the context of redemptive history?
- How does Elijah's presence in Sidon demonstrate the principle of replacement?

B. The Command and Promise Given to the Widow (1 Kings 17:10-16)

- **The Widow's Desperate Situation:**How does the widow's poverty highlight the severity of the drought and famine?
- What does her willingness to use her last resources say about her character?
- **Elijah's Demand:**Why is Elijah's request for her last food more than just a test of generosity?
- How does Elijah's request relate to God's demand for complete devotion from Israel (Deuteronomy 26)?
- **Covenant and Promise:**How is Elijah's demand both a demand *and* a privilege for the widow?
- How does the miracle of the flour and oil connect to the covenant relationship between God and His people?
- What role do the widow's faith and obedience play in receiving God's blessing?

C. The Death of the Widow's Son and Elijah's Ministry (1 Kings 17:17-24)

- **Common Interpretations of the Passage:**What are some typical spiritual and moral lessons drawn from the story of the widow's son?

- What are the dangers of using this passage simply as an illustration for pre-existing ideas?
- **The Question of God's Justice:** Why are both the widow and Elijah perplexed by the death of the son?
- How does the widow initially interpret the death of her son?
- **Elijah's Intercession:** Why doesn't Elijah respond directly to the widow's accusations?
- How does Elijah's prayer reflect the widow's confusion and sense of betrayal?
- **Redemptive-Historical Significance:** How does the death of the child lead to a deeper level of ministry from Elijah to the widow?
- How does this episode demonstrate the continued operation of the principle of replacement?
- How does Elijah's ministry lead the widow to a renewed confession of faith?
- **Consequences of the Death of the Son:** How did the death reveal a weakness in the widow's faith?
- What did the experience drive Elijah to do, and what was his motivation?
- **First Resurrection:** What does the resurrection signify in terms of God's power and character?
- Why is it significant that the first resurrection in Scripture occurs in a heathen land?
- What does this narrative teach us about the nature of God?

III. Quiz:

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. Explain the principle of replacement and how it applies to the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath.
2. According to the lecture, what is the main problem with interpreting this story as just an example of God caring for Elijah?
3. Why is the location of Zarephath of Sidon significant in this narrative?

4. How is Elijah's request for the widow's last bit of food both a demand and a privilege?
5. Explain the difference between anthropocentric and theocentric preaching approaches.
6. Why were the widow and Elijah perplexed by the death of her son?
7. What did the death of the son reveal about the widow's faith in God's promise?
8. How did Elijah's prophetic ministry expand after the death of the widow's son?
9. What is the significance of the fact that the first resurrection in the Bible occurred outside of Israel?
10. How does this story demonstrate that God's word demands one's entire life and all that a person has?

IV. Essay Questions:

1. Discuss the principle of replacement as it is illustrated in 1 Kings 17. How does this principle relate to the broader narrative of the Old Testament and potentially to the New Testament?
2. Compare and contrast a redemptive-historical interpretation of 1 Kings 17 with a more traditional, moralistic approach. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?
3. Analyze the character of the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17. Is she primarily a model of faith, or does the narrative highlight her weaknesses and growth?
4. Explore the role of miracles in 1 Kings 17. How do these miracles function within the narrative, and what do they reveal about God's character and purposes?
5. Discuss the relationship between covenant demand and promise in 1 Kings 17. How does this relationship shape the actions of both Elijah and the widow?

V. Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Redemptive History:** The unfolding story of God's saving activity in history, culminating in Jesus Christ.
- **Principle of Replacement:** The concept that God may transfer the blessings and obligations of His covenant from one group of people to another, based on faithfulness and obedience.

- **Theocentric:** God-centered; an approach that emphasizes God's character, sovereignty, and actions.
- **Anthropocentric:** Human-centered; an approach that emphasizes human experience, needs, and agency.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or relationship between God and humanity, involving promises, obligations, and blessings.
- **Sidon:** An ancient Phoenician city, often associated with idolatry and opposition to the true God.
- **Zarephath:** A town near Sidon, located in Gentile territory; the place where Elijah found refuge with the widow.
- **First Fruits:** A religious offering of the first yield of the harvest.
- **Vindication:** To clear someone of blame or suspicion.

VI. Answer Key:

1. The principle of replacement is when God calls the heathen to the obligations and privileges of the covenant after His chosen people reject His message. In this story, the widow of Zarephath, a Gentile, is chosen to sustain Elijah, the prophet, when Israel is experiencing a drought due to their unfaithfulness. This highlights that God's blessings can extend beyond Israel to those who respond in faith and obedience.
2. The main problem with interpreting the story solely as an example of God caring for Elijah is that it reduces the narrative to a simple act of divine provision. This interpretation overlooks the broader redemptive-historical context, namely the principle of replacement and God's shift in focus from Israel to a Gentile widow.
3. The location of Zarephath of Sidon is significant because Sidon was the city from which Jezebel came. She introduced Baal worship into Israel. Sidon embodies the antithesis between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan at that particular time.
4. Elijah's request is a demand because he is asking her to give up her last means of survival. However, it is also a privilege because it is accompanied by a promise from God that her jar of flour and jug of oil will not run dry until the drought ends, signifying a unique opportunity to experience God's provision.

5. Anthropocentric preaching focuses on human experiences, needs, and applications, while theocentric preaching centers on God's character, sovereignty, and actions. Anthropocentric preaching makes application easy, while theocentric preaching focuses on the application that it exalts God.
6. The widow and Elijah are perplexed by the death of her son because they see it as a contradiction to God's promise of provision and blessing. It is difficult to reconcile the fact that she obeyed God by feeding Elijah, and yet experienced this devastating loss.
7. The death of the son revealed a weakness in the widow's faith because she initially blamed Elijah and questioned God's motives. She doubted the promise of life and provision, reacting in fear and mistrust rather than remaining confident in God's word.
8. Elijah's prophetic ministry expanded after the death of the widow's son as he was driven to intercede on her behalf. This act of intercession led to the resurrection of her son, solidifying her belief in the truthfulness of God's word.
9. The fact that the first resurrection in the Bible occurred outside of Israel is significant because it highlights God's willingness to extend his power and grace to Gentiles. It demonstrates the principle of replacement, where blessings are given to those who were previously considered outsiders.
10. This story shows God's word demands one's entire life because Elijah asks the widow for the last of her food. The widow must decide if she will trust the word of God, or if she will only partially trust the word of God.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Exodus to Exile -- Kings, Session 11, Elijah, the Widow of Zarephath, the Redemptive History, 1 Kings 17, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17)

- **What is the "principle of replacement" as it relates to the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath?**
- The "principle of replacement" refers to God calling those outside of Israel (specifically, Gentiles/heathens) to experience the blessings and responsibilities of the covenant that Israel, as a nation, was rejecting. In 1 Kings 17, this is demonstrated by God sending Elijah to a widow in Zarephath (a region of Sidon, a pagan area) to be sustained, bypassing the many widows within Israel itself. This principle suggests that God's favor and provision are not limited to a specific ethnic group but are extended to those who respond in faith and obedience, regardless of their background.
- **Why was Elijah instructed to go to Zarephath of Sidon, a region associated with Jezebel and opposition to God?**
- Elijah's relocation to Zarephath, a city of Sidon (the origin of Jezebel who introduced Baal worship to Israel), highlights God's sovereignty and power. It signifies God's ability to establish and sustain his word even in the heart of enemy territory. By sending Elijah to Zarephath, God demonstrated that his influence and provision are not limited by geographical or political boundaries; He is capable of working even in places that are centers of opposition to true faith.
- **How is the significance of Elijah's move to Zarephath often misinterpreted, and what is the correct focus?**
- The significance of Elijah's move is often misinterpreted as simply a story about God's care for Elijah in a time of need, or emphasizing Elijah's patience and faith. However, the primary focus should be on the shift in God's redemptive work. The administration of God's word is moved *to* Zarephath. The central point is not merely Elijah's personal circumstances, but the deliberate change in location as it relates to God's broader plan of salvation and the inclusion of Gentiles.

- **What is the significance of Elijah asking the widow to give him the last of her food?**
- Elijah's request for the last of the widow's food was not simply about meeting his personal needs but rather a test of her faith and obedience to God's word. It was a demand, reflective of God's covenant demand of complete allegiance, demanding all that she had. This act reveals that obedience to God's word requires complete surrender and trust, even when it seems impossible or counterintuitive. The request also became a privilege as it was accompanied by a promise of miraculous provision.
- **What is the relationship between covenant demand and covenant promise in this story?**
- The story highlights that the covenant demand (the requirement of obedience and faith) is inseparable from the covenant promise (God's assurance of blessing and provision). Elijah's request for the widow's last meal represents the covenant demand, while the promise of the unending flour and oil embodies the covenant promise. The widow's obedience to the demand unlocks the fulfillment of the promise, illustrating that God's blessings are contingent upon a response of faith and submission.
- **Why did the widow's son die after she had shown faith and obedience to Elijah?**
- The death of the widow's son was a perplexing tragedy that challenged both her faith and Elijah's. While it's tempting to seek individualistic moral lessons, the death highlights a critical moment in the narrative where God's redemptive plan takes center stage. The widow initially interpreted the death as punishment for her sin, but it ultimately served to deepen her understanding of God's power and truth.
- **How did the death and resurrection of the widow's son advance redemptive history?**
- The death and subsequent resurrection of the widow's son marked the first recorded instance of resurrection in Scripture. This miracle, performed outside of Israel in a pagan land, demonstrates the universal reach of God's power and grace. The resurrection served to solidify the widow's faith, leading her to acknowledge Elijah as a man of God and to affirm the truth of God's word. It also brought Elijah's prophetic ministry into direct service to the widow.

- **What does the story of Elijah and the widow teach us about God's character and his relationship with humanity?**
- The story reveals several key aspects of God's character: His sovereignty and ability to work in unexpected places and through unlikely people, His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises to those who trust Him, His compassion and concern for the marginalized and vulnerable, and His power to bring life from death. It also demonstrates that God's love and grace extend beyond ethnic or national boundaries, offering salvation and blessing to all who respond in faith and obedience.