

1 Kings 17:8-24
Psalm 146
Galatians 1:11-24
Luke 7:11-17

Notes on the Old Testament Lesson

One can only imagine the reluctance of Elijah to travel to Zarephath. Remember that Elijah's greatest foe was Queen Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon. Zarephath, near the Mediterranean coast in what today is Lebanon, was in the territory of Sidon in Elijah's time. Surely it must have seemed to Elijah that he was going from the frying pan into the fire.

It is noteworthy that Elijah's mission of mercy and the miracles wrought in connection with this widow are outside of the covenant community. The widow of Zarephath was a Gentile. Indeed, when Jesus referred to this miracle, as well as to one other healing of a Gentile by a prophet, he was attacked by those in the synagogue (Luke 4: 24 - 29).

Notes on the Epistle Lesson

There is some debate as to which exact area Paul was writing this letter. There were two regions in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) that were known as Galatia; one in the north that was a Roman province and the other in the south originally populated by Gauls, who were later called Galatians. The book of Acts refers to churches in the southern region visited by Paul (Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe) but there is no reference in the letter to the Galatians that specifies either region.

Wherever the Galatian churches were located, they had been founded by Paul but had subsequently repudiated his theology based on the teachings of some "Judaizers" who stressed obedience to the Law of Moses as a central tenant of Christianity. We do not know who these Judaizers were. There is some thought that they were missionaries from the Jerusalem church or perhaps they came from within the Galatian congregations. Whoever they were, they questioned Paul's claim to be an apostle and ridiculed him as a late-comer to Christianity whose gospel was incomplete and inaccurate.

Galatians is one of two letters from Paul that respond to criticism with anger and bitterness. (The other, of which we have only a fragment, is found in 2 Corinthians 10 - 13.) From the beginning of the text, he defends his gospel as "not of human origin," but that he had "received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." He points out that after his conversion he did not go to Jerusalem to learn from the other apostles but went to Arabia before returning to Damascus. It was only then that he went to Jerusalem and met with Cephas (the Greek name for Peter) and James who praised God for Paul's work. Paul is making clear that from the beginning of his ministry he was accepted and endorsed by the two pillars of the Jerusalem church.

Notes on the Gospel Lesson

The village of Nain is on the side of the hill of Moreh in the Jezreel Valley. This village is only about six miles from Nazareth. A photo of the modern village of Nain, with the side of Moreh in the background, appears to the right.

The widow's son in this passage is one of three people specifically mentioned in the gospels as being raised from the dead by Jesus. (The other two are the daughter of Jairus and Lazarus.)

