

Luke 4:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

Analysis

But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. The emphatic construction *pros oudemian autōn... ei mē* (πρὸς οὐδεμίαν αὐτῶν... εἰ μή, to not one of them... except) stresses God's sovereign choice. Despite numerous needy Israelite widows, God directed Elijah specifically to Zarephath (Sarepta) in Sidon—Gentile territory.

The location is theologically loaded. Sidon was Phoenician territory, home to Baal worship, and Jezebel's homeland. That God sent His prophet to sustain a widow there while Israelite widows starved under covenantal curse demonstrates grace transcending ethnic boundaries. This previews the gospel going to Gentiles when Israel rejects Messiah. The widow's faith (she obeyed Elijah's word despite impossible circumstances, 1 Kings 17:13-15) contrasts with Israel's unbelief.

Historical Context

Zarephath (Hebrew Tsarephath, meaning "refining") was a Phoenician coastal town between Tyre and Sidon, about 13 miles south of Sidon and 50 miles north of Nazareth. Jesus deliberately chose an example His audience would find scandalous—God blessing a Gentile in Baal-worshiping territory while judging covenant Israel. The widow's faith and obedience, despite being a Gentile, demonstrated that God honors faith wherever He finds it. Her miraculous provision (oil and flour never running out) and her son's resurrection foreshadowed Jesus' own ministry of provision and resurrection power.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's choice to bless a Gentile widow in Baal-worshipping territory challenge ethnic or religious pride?
2. What does this account teach about God's freedom to extend grace beyond conventional boundaries?
3. How does the widow's faith despite impossible circumstances challenge your own response to God's word?

Interlinear Text

καὶ πρὸς οὐδεμίαν αὐτῶν ἐπέμφθη Ἑλίας εἰ μὴ εἰς
But **unto** **none** **of them** **sent** **Elias** G1487 G3361 **unto**
G2532 G4314 G3762 G846 G3992 G2243 G1519

Σάρεπτα τῆς Σιδῶνος πρὸς γυναῖκα χήραν
Sarepta G3588 **a city of Sidon** **unto** **a woman** **that was a widow**
G4558 G4605 G4314 G1135 G5503

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 11:21 (Parallel theme): Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.