

OBADIAH- whose widow complained  
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(I KINGS 18: 5-16 ; 2 KINGS 4: 1-7)

The writings of Josephus suggest an interesting possibility in regard to two Old Testament personalities. Supported by other authorities, the historian declares that the widow whose pot of oil was miraculously increased by the prophet Elisha, was none other than Obadiah's widow. " For they say that the widow of Obadiah, Ahab's steward, came to Elisha and said, that he was not ignorant how her husband had preserved the prophets that were to be slain by Jezebel, the wife of Ahab ; for she said, that he hid a hundred of them, and had borrowed money for their maintenance, and that, after her husband's death, she and her children were carried away to be made slaves by the creditors ; and she desired of him to have mercy upon her on account of what her husband did, and afford her some assistance. And when he asked her what she had in the house, she said, ' Nothing but a very small quantity of oil in a cruse.' So the prophet bid her go away, and borrow a great many empty vessels of her neighbors, and when she had shut her chamber door, to pour the oil into them all: for that God would fill them full." A footnote to this quotation reads, " That this woman who cried to Elisha, and who in our Bible is styled ' the wife of one of the sons of the prophets,' was no other than the widow of Obadiah, the good steward of Ahab, is confirmed by the Chaldee paraphrase and by the Robbins and others . . . " (Antiquities of the Jews. Book nine, chapter four, para. two). If these statements are founded on fact, then the ancient account becomes increasingly interesting.

#### An Exceptional Ministry-Inspiring

King Ahab was very angry, and his inflammatory temper had turned interviews into nightmare experiences for an his subjects. The country had been ravaged by unprecedented drought, and disaster threatened the nation. The irate monarch cursed the prophet Elijah, and vowed that he should be executed. " Obadiah, where are you?" and the anxious prime minister bowed before his master. " Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks ; peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. So they divided the land between them" (I Kings 18: 5, 6). Had Ahab known that his chief executive officer was at that very time sheltering a company of the hated prophets of God, Obadiah would have been instantly slain. This is the highlight of Old Testament secret

service ; for in the very shadow of the palace, the prime minister nightly risked his life to serve the cause of God.

#### An Expensive Ministry-Impoverishing

His statement to Elijah, " Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?" (v. 13) provides a window through which we may view the activities of those dread nights. Under cover of darkness, hunted saints were quietly led along mountain paths to the shelter of a remote cave. Yet every enterprise of this nature needed money, and Obadiah financed the venture. It would appear that all his savings were sacrificed, and that ultimately he had to borrow money or abandon his efforts. Some teachers have declared that his secret endeavors evidenced a lack of courage ; that

OBADIAH- whose widow complained he should have boldly confronted Ahab, confessing his faith in God. Yet such an act would have invited disaster not only to the indiscreet man, but to many others who were dependent upon his endeavors. It will be to his everlasting credit that, rather than abandon his friends, he willingly spent all he possessed.

#### An Exasperating Ministry- Implemented

If we may accept the teaching of ancient writers, then in after days, when Obadiah had died, his widow, impoverished and in danger of slavery, cried to Elisha for assistance. She claimed that the prophet was fully conversant with the details of her misfortune -1 that such a state of affairs had been brought about by her husband's loyalty to the cause of God. Surely something ought to be done about the matter. And Elisha smiled. He might have said, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb. 6: 10). The woman obeyed the commands of God's servant, and soon had sufficient money to meet all her needs. Thus did God reward the faithfulness of His children. Obadiah never lived to see the realization of his dreams, for his greatest prayers were answered after his death, God is no man's debtor, and money and time invested in His work will return amazing dividends.

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