

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

ZAREPHATH WIDOW LESSON SEVEN

by Sandy Harber

"So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks." I Kings 17:10a

Elijah immediately left the area that he had called home for the last year or so. If God's plan for him was to go to Zarephath, then that's where he would go. He did not question why God was sending him to Jezebel's old stomping grounds. Jezebel hailed from Sidon, which was near Zarephath. Elijah simply trusted God and obeyed His command.

The journey was nearly 100 miles. The Bible doesn't give us any details about his trip to Phoenicia, like where and how he found food, water, and shelter on the road. He was still considered an enemy of the state by the king and queen of Israel. And, in Phoenicia he was a stranger, an outsider.

God had told Elijah that He had commanded a widow to help him. But, once Elijah got to Zarephath, how was he supposed to find this widow? Did Elijah wonder how he was going to identify this woman? He certainly couldn't ask people to point out all the widows in the area. Perhaps, Elijah was not worried at all but trusted that God would point her out when the time came.

The time came quickly. Elijah found the widow at the gate to the city. He didn't have to search for her at all. As soon as he arrived at Zarephath there she was. How did he know that she was the one? Scripture doesn't tell us. It may be that the Spirit of God revealed the woman's identity to the prophet.

The widow was not on the lookout for Elijah. She was busy with her own problems. God may have commanded the woman to help His prophet but she was unaware of it. The widow had her own agenda.

If often happens that way, especially with unbelievers. They are pursuing their goals their way for their own purposes. Yet their actions intersect God's Plan and they play their part, never realizing that God is using them to further His Own Plan. The sovereignty of God means that God is in control. Everybody works for God.

On this occasion, God arranged for the widow to be in the gate searching for wood at the exact moment Elijah arrived. She did not recognize Elijah. She wasn't looking for him. The widow had no idea that a total stranger was about to enter her life and alter it forever.

It was Elijah who realized that this widow was the woman of whom God had spoken. Elijah's spirit was attuned to God's Spirit.

God can use me and my circumstances to help others, too. He can do this without my cooperation or knowledge, like He did the widow. Or, I can voluntarily participate in God's Plan as it is revealed to me, as Elijah did. It's my choice to listen for the Spirit of God to direct me.

God is not elusive. He wants to be part of my life. He wants a close relationship with me. It's up to me to choose. If I choose God, that colors the way that I live. My choice of friends and activities and, even, speech should be in line with God's teaching. I have an advantage that Elijah did not have in that I have the completed Word of God at my fingertips. I have the Son of God as my Savior, the Spirit of God as my indwelling Teacher, and the Word of God as my guide book. I am truly blessed. How about you?

"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." I Peter 1:16