

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

SONS OF THE PROPHETS' WIDOW LESSON ONE

by Sandy Harber

"Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead." II Kings 4:1a

"A certain woman's" story begins with the death of her husband. The name of the widow is not given. She is simply identified as "a certain woman." That is, she is a specific wife of one of the Sons of the Prophets, singled out from the other wives. Was there something special about her? Perhaps her story is included in Scripture because it demonstrates the power of God. Or, it may be Elisha that is the central figure of the story. But, for our purposes, it is the widow that we will focus on.

We know that she was a married woman whose husband had died, leaving her with two sons to raise alone. A widow in ancient Israel did not have a lot of options. Women were expected to marry and bear children. They did not engage in employment outside the home. They did not earn a paycheck. They were, therefore, left in an untenable position when their breadwinner husband passed away. Most widows faced poverty and had to subsist on the charity and good will of others. A widow with young children to provide for was in a difficult position. Young widows generally had to remarry to survive.

The death of a spouse is a traumatic experience. Too often there are additional circumstances that arise which must be dealt with. As with the widow in our story financial obligations and/or the loss of income will add distress to an already emotional situation. There may be young children or elderly parents that require support and attention. Too often disputes arise over assets or property that the deceased had owned.

Death is the result of the disobedience of our original parents. It's part of the curse that was placed upon all of creation (Gen. 3:19). It's not supposed to be pleasant. But, praise God, Jesus has overcome death (Rev. 1:18).

Death is separation. Physical death involves the separation of the soul and spirit from the body. While the body remains on earth the soul and spirit move on to heaven or hell. But thanks to Jesus this separation is just temporary. One day there will be a resurrection of the dead when the soul and spirit are embedded once again in a physical body that has been transformed into an incorruptible, immortal vessel (I Cor. 15:51-54; Jn. 5:28-29).

Spiritual death (also called "the second death") involves separation from God. The spirit part of man, the part that can communicate with God, Who is a Spirit, died when Adam and Eve sinned (Ezek. 18:4). Mankind lost fellowship with God. But Jesus has breached the gap between God and man by paying the sin debt that we owe and satisfying God's justice so that He can offer forgiveness (Heb. 10:12-16). When we accept Jesus' offer of salvation our spirit is made alive within us and we are able to fellowship with God (Eph 2:1).

Jesus is the cure for our separation problems. He has overcome death, both physical and spiritual. And, there is one more separation brought on by death that He has overcome. That is the separation we experience when a loved one dies. My husband has moved on to heaven. Right now I can't see him. I can't hear him. I can't have fellowship with him. But, because we both put our faith in Jesus Christ, some day we will be together again. Whether I die and go to be where he is or we both meet up at the Rapture (I Thess 4:13-18) we will be reunited. Thank You, Jesus!

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" I Corinthians 15:55