

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### ZAREPHATH WIDOW INTRODUCTION

by Sandy Harber

I Kings 17 records the story of a woman known only as "the widow of Zarephath." Her name is never given, nor that of her husband or her son. We have no idea who her husband was or how and when he died. We know she lived in Zarephath on the Mediterranean Coast, near Sidon (Zidon), which was in Phoenicia. She was a Gentile who was most likely reared in idolatry. The Phoenicians worshipped Baal and his female counterpart, Ashtaroth. It is unclear whether or not she had faith in Jehovah, the God of Israel, before she met Elijah. But she had at least known of Him.

What God did for this poor Gentile widow is amazing. She lived during a dark time in Israel's history, when the Jewish people had turned from their faith in Jehovah and embraced the worship of the gods of their neighbor, Phoenicia. The union between Ahab, King of Israel, and Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, had a lot to do with this defection. As a result, God withheld rain for three and a half years. The resulting drought and famine affected Israel's neighbors, including Phoenicia, as well.

I Kings 17 also introduces to the pages of Scripture Elijah, that great prophet of God. One of the most notable of Jehovah's prophets, Elijah frequently confronted King Ahab, delivering unwelcome and devastating pronouncements from the Lord. The three and a half year drought being the first message.

God brought the great prophet into the life of this poor Gentile widow on the day that she expected to eat her last meal before starvation took her and her son. This meeting changed her life. This meeting saved her life. And, for the next two and a half years, the widow would witness the unlimited power of God. And she would experience the benefits of His grace.