

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### ZAREPHATH WIDOW LESSON TWENTY-THREE

by Sandy Harber

**"And the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." I Kings 17:22b**

This is the first recorded resurrection in Scripture. Why here and now? Why this child? God showed His great power to His Own prophet in the privacy of his room. Only Elijah witnessed the miracle. Only God's prophet and a poor widow knew what God had done.

It was a dark time in the history of the nation Israel. King Ahab was on the throne. The Bible tells us that Ahab "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him" (I Kings 16:30). The "all" that were before him included all of the kings over the ten tribes of Israel all the way back to Jeroboam, the first king over the tribes that rebelled against David's grandson, Rehoboam (I Kings 12:16). Jeroboam began his reign by turning the people away from their God, Jehovah, and substituting two golden calf statues as the "gods" that delivered them from bondage in Egypt (I Kings 12:26-29). Jeroboam instituted idolatry that was never eradicated completely until Israel was conquered by Assyria in 722 BC (II Kings 17:5-18).

Ahab took the Phoenician princess, Jezebel, for his wife (I Kings 16:31). Queen Jezebel was fanatical in the worship of Baal, which became the state religion (I Kings 16:31-33). She sponsored 400 prophets of the goddess Ashtaroath, consort to the god Baal. Ahab and Jezebel built temples and altars to Baal and Ashtaroath. They attempted to shut down the worship of Jehovah and kill all His prophets. Eventually the 450 prophets of Baal faced off against Elijah on Mt Carmel (I Kings 18:17-20). Perhaps the resurrection of one small boy was a prelude to that very public contest between Jehovah and Baal.

In his small room in the heart of Baal territory Elijah witnessed the power of the God he served. Zarephath was ruled by Jezebel's father, Ethbaal, who led his people in the worship of Baal. The people believed that Baal was the god of fertility. He would "die" in the winter, but be restored to life in the spring. Thus, he was thought to have the power to restore people to life. There is no record of Baal resurrecting anyone. But, in Baal's stronghold, Jehovah restored life to the young son of an insignificant widow.

Elijah experienced the ultimate response to his prayer. He saw firsthand the great power of God. This must have given him great confidence in his God and in his relationship with the Lord. Perhaps God showed Elijah this miracle at this time because He knew that's what the prophet needed to push him on to challenge the 450 prophets of Baal to a contest. Elijah knew what the outcome would be because he had experienced the power of the Almighty. But more than that, he saw how God could use him to effect that miracle. On Mt Carmel he would have to believe not only that God could send down fire from heaven, but he also had to believe that God would do so when he prayed for it.

Sometimes the doubt we feel isn't in regard to God's capability to do what we ask but in His willingness to do it when we ask. It is our relationship that is in doubt. Why would God do this for me? God loves you so much He died for you (Romans 5:8). Why wouldn't He do it?

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."  
John 16:23a*