

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

ZAREPHATH WIDOW LESSON ELEVEN

by Sandy Harber

"And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth...." I Kings 17:12a

The widow wants Elijah to understand that what she is about to tell him is the absolute truth. Thus, she invokes the name of the Lord God of Israel. She is basically swearing an oath in the name of Jehovah.

"As the Lord thy God liveth," she says. "Thy God," meaning Elijah's God. She recognized that He is an Israelite. So it makes sense that he would be a worshipper of Israel's one and only God: Jehovah. Perhaps she recognized that he is a prophet. Probably by his attire, which is distinctive. Again, if he is a prophet - a messenger of God - from Israel, who would he serve except Jehovah, the God of his people? It's obvious she links Elijah with the God in Whose name she takes her oath.

Did the widow also serve God at this point in her life? The Scriptures don't tell us and Bible scholars vary in their opinions. If she did already worship the God of Israel, then it explains why she was so willing to obey Elijah's requests. But, then, why stress "thy" God if He were her own as well? Perhaps she recognized Jehovah as "a god," one of many that she believed existed, although she did not specifically worship Him. Or, maybe she invoked the name of Elijah's God so that he would understand that what she was telling him was the unvarnished truth.

It's interesting that her oath is based on the fact that the God of Israel "liveth." She acknowledged that He is a real, living Being. He is not a statue made of wood, stone, or metal. He exists. She doesn't realize it, of course, but He is the source of life (Jn. 1:4). But she stressed that her statement is as true as the fact that Jehovah is a living Being.

Jesus warned His disciples not to swear an oath at all (Mt. 5:33-37). If they always told the truth, then it would not be necessary to make an oath. Their reputation as truth tellers would be enough to convince others of their veracity.

What kind of a reputation do you have? Do people readily accept everything you say as gospel, or do they doubt? The Bible tells us that "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are His delight" (Prov. 12:22). We are ambassadors representing Jesus (II Cor. 5:21) on earth. Therefore, our reputations reflect on Him for good or evil.

The widow of Zarephath was a truth teller but Elijah did not know her even by reputation. So she swore by the life of Elijah's God. As Christians, we do not want to swear by God or anything He has created. Instead, we simply tell the truth. All the time. To everybody. This is one of the ways that we show our obedience to His Word, which is Truth (John 17:17). It is one way we can be an example of Jesus, Who is Truth (John 14:6) to unbelievers. It is one way to prove we are indwelt by the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13).

What is the first piece of spiritual armor you put on? The belt of Truth (Eph. 6:14). The rest of the armor hangs on the belt of Truth. It is essential. Be sure you put it on every morning. Resist the temptation to suppress the truth or only reveal part of the truth. Both are as bad as an outright lie. Remember, it is the Truth that sets you free (Jn. 8:32).

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32