

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### ZAREPHATH WIDOW LESSON TWENTY-ONE

by Sandy Harber

**"And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again." I Kings 17:21**

The body of the widow's deceased son was laid out on Elijah's bed in his upper room. The prophet cried out to the Lord in his anguish. Why had God taken the boy's life? The widow blamed herself for the tragedy. Elijah questioned the Lord, perhaps fearing that he was in part responsible for the boy's demise. God never explained why the child died. Elijah, then, stretched out upon the boy and prayed for God to restore the child's soul to his body. Death, as we know, occurs when the soul and spirit leave the body.

On the sixth day of Creation God formed the physical body of man from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). Then He joined the immaterial part of man (soul and spirit) to the material part (body) when He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). Thus, man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). The soul of man is comprised of his intellect, emotions, and will. These same personality characteristics reflect the attributes of God, Who also possesses intellect, emotions, and will. Man also reflects the image of God in that he is a moral being who is capable of free will and responsibility. In addition, man possesses a spirit, that part of himself that is able to communicate with God, Who is Himself a Spirit. The Hebrew (and Greek and Latin) word translated "spirit" means "to breathe." God, Who is Spirit, literally breathed a part of Himself into the body of man. Fellowship with God is enabled by this link, spirit to Spirit. Sin destroyed this link and the spirit part of man died, breaking the fellowship between God and man (Eph. 2:1, 5). All of mankind has been born with the spirit part of us dead, that is, non-functioning (Rom. 5:12). As sinners, we cannot have fellowship with a holy God. But Jesus' atoning death breached the barrier to fellowship and the Holy Spirit restored ("quicken" or made alive) that spirit part of man (Eph. 2:5) when we accepted Him as our Savior. Fellowship between man and God was restored.

Elijah laid down on the body of the lifeless child a second time, imploring God to raise the boy to life. Then, a third time, the prophet stretched out his body over that of the deceased boy and prayed the same prayer. Why did Elijah not simply kneel beside the bed and pray for the little boy? Short answer: I don't know. Several commentaries have suggested that he was identifying with the boy. It has also been pointed out that he repeated this action three times, once for each member of the Trinity.

Elisha performed a similar miracle for the young son of the Shunammite woman, who had provided him a room in her home (II Kings 4:32-35). Elisha also laid down upon the child and prayed for him. The description of the two incidents differ, however. Elijah laid down upon the widow's son three separate times, praying each time. Elisha first prayed for the Shunammite woman's son (II Kings 4:33). Then he laid down on the child, placing his mouth on the child's mouth, his eyes on the child's eyes, and his hands on the child's hands, and stretched his body upon the child's (v. 34). Heat returned to the little boy's body (v. 34). That is, his flesh felt warm, life was returning to the cold body. Next, Elisha got up and paced back and forth in the room (v. 35). Certainly he was entreating God for the boy's life as he walked. Finally, he stretched out his body upon the child's a second time (v. 35). Then the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes (v. 35).

God's love for the widow of Zarephath is amazing. Raised in a pagan society, not one of God's Chosen People, she, nevertheless, was rescued from starvation by the personal appearance of God's Own prophet, who stayed with her until the drought ended. When her son became ill and died God's prophet was right there on the spot, living in her own house, able to restore the child to life. Why did God send Elijah to her? Perhaps because He knew this day would come. God cares for each one of us as much as He did that widow. We don't need to understand why every little thing that happens in our lives happen. We just need to have faith in the One Who controls all.

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1*