

## WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

### ZAREPHATH WIDOW LESSON FIFTEEN

by Sandy Harber

**"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah." I Kings 17:15a**

The Prophet Elijah was a complete stranger to the widow. Yet she immediately responded by doing what he told her to do. Their conversation probably lasted less than five minutes, but in that time she decided that this man spoke for the Living God and she should obey him.

The widow of Zarephath knew of the God of Israel. Perhaps she already believed in Him. Perhaps not. But she was open to the possibility of His influence in her life. She obviously accepted that Elijah was a spokesman for His God. She believed the message that Elijah gave her. And she acted on that belief by doing what Elijah told her to do.

The widow's life - and that of her son - was literally saved by this five minute conversation with Jehovah's prophet. If the widow had rejected Elijah's message she would probably have gone home and made that last meal for herself and her son. And then starved. Instead, she believed the words of Elijah and obeyed him. God rewarded her faith by preserving her life and the life of her son through the drought.

Have you ever spoken to a stranger while standing in line somewhere or sitting on a park bench and recognized that he or she was a fellow believer? I'm amazed how often I have found myself talking to a brother or sister in Christ who I had never met before. There's just something inside a believer (the Holy Spirit) that recognizes another believer in Christ on sight. These little encounters are encouraging and uplifting. Some people call them "divine appointments."

God set up an appointment for Elijah and the widow for their mutual benefit. Elijah was given advance notice of the appointment. The widow wasn't. Elijah knew the place (Zarephath) and purpose (to preserve their lives) of the meeting. From the widow's point of view this was an accidental meeting with a random stranger. She didn't realize that God had arranged everything. There are no "accidents" in God's universe.

The Prophet Elijah obeyed God and traveled to Zarephath to keep his appointment with the widow. He followed the Lord's leading, understanding that this was God's will for his life. He trusted God completely and cooperated fully with God's plan.

The widow was not on the lookout for Elijah or anyone else to deliver her from her plight. Elijah's first words to her made it appear as though he needed her help, not the other way around. He was a stranger in need of a cup of water during a drought. She was willing to put aside her problems for a moment and help this stranger from Israel. As their acquaintance progressed she was made aware of God's promise to deliver her from her circumstances. It became clear that her meeting with Elijah was no accident. The widow trusted the word of God delivered through His prophet. She immediately left the city gate and proceeded home to start baking that little cake for Elijah. She chose to believe and obey.

God is working behind the scenes in your life, too. And mine. While He may allow difficulties into our lives He also makes a way through the darkness. He may reveal His plan, as He did for Elijah. Or, His plan may unfold slowly as it did for the widow. In either case, the correct response is trust and obedience.

*"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm 147:3*