



## First Kings - Chapter Seventeen

### Summary of Chapter Seventeen

Chapter 17 provides the context – a divinely ordained drought – in which the climactic demonstration of the truth about God and the ‘gods’ will take place in 1 Kings 18:16-40. This passage teaches that it is the Lord, not Baal or any other so called god, who controls both life and death, both fertility and infertility.

This is exemplified in two amazing miracles that the Lord then performs through Elijah. He is instructed to travel to Zarephath where he meets a widow. When Elijah asks her to bring him some water and a little food, she replies that she has nothing cooked and all she has is enough for one last meal for her son and herself, and then they will die because of the drought. However, Elijah persuades her to bring the food and drink to him. When she does so, the little amount of meal and oil she has continues to provide for them throughout the drought.

The son of the widow then fell ill and died. The widow blamed Elijah for bringing this disaster so he took the child to his room and pray to God, who answered him by restoring the boy’s life. When he was returned to his mother alive her faith in Elijah and God was evident.

### **V 1 Kings 17:1-22:40 - Elijah and Ahab**

Before this time no prophet had addressed the house of Omri as Israel’s earlier royal houses had been addressed, but now Elijah is introduced. His announcement of doom on the house of Omri will be delayed, however, until 1 Kings 21:21-24. His first task is to tackle the problem of the Baal worship that Ahab has introduced into Israel in 1 Kings 16:31-32, and to demonstrate beyond all doubt that Baal is no more a god in any real sense than are Jeroboam’s bull calves that he had introduced as objects of worship.

## V.a 1 Kings 17:1-24 - Elijah and the Drought

Refer to the chapter summary above.

### V.a.i 1 Kings 17:1-7 - Elijah Predicts a Drought

After telling King Ahab that the Lord would bring a drought upon the land until a time when he decided to lift it, Elijah was instructed to return east of the River Jordan and hide by the Wadi Cherith. There he was fed by ravens.

<sup>1</sup> Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.’

#### 1 Kings 17:1

Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead. At this crucial time in the history of Judah and Israel, the prophet Elijah suddenly appeared. He became the dominant spiritual force in Israel during the dark days of Ahab’s apostasy. The name Elijah means ‘Yahweh is my God’. In the days when Ahab’s government officially supported the worship of Baal and other gods, even the name of this prophet told the truth.

Gilead lay to the east of the Jordan River, several hundred miles south of Paddan-aram, and was a recognised trade route from Arabia into Egypt. It was part of the land allocation given to the half tribe of Manasseh, the Gadites, and to the Reubenites who had decided to dwell east of Jordan: <<*As for the land that we took possession of at that time, I gave to the Reubenites and Gadites the territory north of Aroer that is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, as well as half the hill country of Gilead with its towns, and I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh the rest of Gilead and all of Bashan, Og’s kingdom*>> (Deuteronomy 3:12-13a).

As the Lord the God of Israel lives. This statement is important in its context for two reasons. Firstly, Elijah is telling Ahab that the Lord is a living God as opposed to the pagan gods that he has chosen to worship. Secondly, the Lord is the God of Israel and therefore Ahab, as the king of Israel, can only truly perform that role if he repents and turns to the living God. This was also the plea made by Barnabas and Paul to the Lystrians: <<*Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them*>> (Acts 14:15).

Before whom I stand. This statement of Elijah shows the source of his strength. It is specifically said <<*Elijah was a human being like us*>> (James 5:17a). Yet he showed a strength greater than many Christians in their life with God. Christians

must pay attention to these indications of the source of Elijah's strength. Everyone else felt that the Lord was dead, but for Elijah the Lord lived. He was the supreme reality of Elijah's life. He stood in the presence of Ahab, but he was conscious of the presence of someone greater than any earthly king. Gabriel himself could not choose a higher title: <<*The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news'*>> (Luke 1:19).

There shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word. This was a dramatic demonstration against the pagan god Baal, who was thought to be the sky god, the god of the weather. Elijah showed that through his prayers to the God of Israel, Yahweh was mightier than Baal. Elijah was not merely the prophet of this drought - in the sense of prayer, he was the cause of the drought. He prayed and it happened. The NT makes this clear: <<*Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest*>> (James 5:17-18).

In Canaanite religion, Baal had authority over rain and fertility. The absence of rain meant the absence of Baal, who must periodically submit to the god of death Mot during the dry season, only to be revived at a later date and once again water the earth during the rainy season. This cyclical and polytheistic view of reality is the focus of Elijah's challenges. Elijah worships a single God who lives and yet, while living, can deny both dew and rain to the land. The Lord, not Baal, brings fertility; and the Lord's presence in judgement, not his absence in death, leads to infertility.

<sup>2</sup> The word of the Lord came to him, saying, <sup>3</sup> 'Go from here and turn eastwards, and hide yourself by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. <sup>4</sup> You shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.' <sup>5</sup> So he went and did according to the word of the Lord; he went and lived by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.

### 1 Kings 17:2-5

The word of the Lord came to him. This and similar phrases appear frequently in Scripture as a way of indicating that the recipient is a prophet ordained by God.

Go from here and turn eastwards, and hide yourself by the Wadi Cherith. The drought announced by Elijah in the previous verse was a great threat to the northern kingdom of Israel and the reign of Ahab. Therefore Elijah's life was in danger, and God sent him to the Wadi Cherith for his own safety. God led Elijah one step at a time. He did not tell him to go to Cherith until he had first delivered

the message to Ahab. He did not tell him to go to Zarephath until the brook dried up at Cherith. God led Elijah by faith, one step at a time, and Elijah followed in faith. Through this God taught Elijah the value of the hidden life. He had just become famous as an adversary of Ahab, so mighty that his prayers could stop the rain. At the moment of his new-found fame, God wanted Elijah to hide and be alone with God.

The name **Cherith** comes from the ancient Hebrew root meaning, to cut away, to cut up or off. This shows that God had some cutting or pruning to do in the life of Elijah during this period, just as he does with all of his people from time to time: *<<I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit>>* (John 15:1-2).

**You shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.** The escape to the Wadi Cherith was for more than protection. It was also to train Elijah in dependence upon the Lord. In a season of drought, he had to trust that God could keep this brook flowing. He also had to accept food from the ravens, which were unclean birds. There is an emphasis on the word there. God promised that the ravens would feed Elijah as he stayed at Cherith. Of course, theoretically the ravens could feed him anywhere but God commanded that it be at Cherith. Elijah perhaps wanted to be somewhere else, or be preaching, or doing anything else. Yet God wanted him there and would provide for him there.

**Which is east of the Jordan.** Elijah hides in an inhospitable area where there is no natural food supply. God is nevertheless able to provide for him, for God controls not just the rain but the whole natural order, including the ravens.

<sup>6</sup> The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the wadi.

### **1 Kings 17:6**

**The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening.** As the Israelites had once been the beneficiaries of God's provision of bread and meat in the wilderness in Exodus Chapter 16, especially v.8, and vv.12-13, now Elijah eats even more generous amounts since his food supply is twice daily of the same. God provided for Elijah's needs. He came to trust more than ever in the miraculous provision of God. Every bit of food that came to Elijah came from the beak of an unclean bird. Elijah had to put away his traditional ideas of clean and unclean or he would die of starvation. Through this, God taught Elijah to emphasise the spirit of the law before the letter of the law. The apostle Peter was taught a similar lesson in his generation that would allow Gentiles to be treated as equals by the Jews: *<<Then he heard a voice saying, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten*

*anything that is profane or unclean.’ The voice said to him again, a second time, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane’>> (Acts 10:13-15).*

Charles Spurgeon drew two points of application from this event, likening the food the ravens brought to spiritual food. First, he recognised that God may bring a good word through an unclean vessel, a spiritually unclean like a raven. Second, that one can bring spiritual food to others and still be unclean spiritually themselves. It is possible for people to carry bread and meat to God’s servants, and do, some good things for his church, and yet be ravens still!

<sup>7</sup> But after a while the wadi dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

### 1 Kings 17:7

But after a while the wadi dried up. Elijah saw the flow of the brook slow down until it dried up. His source of water was gone. Why did God allow this precious source of water to dry up? He often wants to teach his people to rely more on him than to take his precious gifts for granted. Also, as in Elijah’s case here, sometimes it is an indication that it is time to move on: <<*You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Resume your journey*>> (Deuteronomy 1:6b-7a).

Because there was no rain in the land. This was the drought Elijah had prayed for. He did not pray for rain to come again, even for his own survival. He kept the purpose of God first, even when it seemed to adversely affect him.

### V.a.ii 1 Kings 17:8-16 - The Widow of Zarephath

After a time, Elijah was instructed by the Lord to travel west to Zarephath, where he encountered a widow. When he asked her for some food and water she told him she had nothing prepared, and the little amount of oil and meal she had remaining was only sufficient for one more meal for herself and her son. After that they would die as a result of the drought. Elijah said that if she brought him a little of the food then the meal and the oil would not run out while the drought persisted. She served him and so the miracle was performed, and she and her son could eat.

<sup>8</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, <sup>9</sup> ‘Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.’

### 1 Kings 17:8-9

Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon. God led Elijah from the dry brook to a Gentile city. This was an unusual and challenging move for Elijah to make. The heartland of Baal worship in Sidon might have been thought by many to be a region over which Israel’s God could have no authority. Yet one discovers as the

story unfolds that it is nevertheless an area also badly affected by the drought announced in v.1. The Lord is God of all lands and can bring drought to all lands. He can even ‘command’ a widow in this northern region to feed Elijah, although since the widow herself shows no awareness of having been directly commanded by God, it may be best to understand the verb here and in v.4 in a more indirect way, i.e. ‘for I have commanded ...’.

God kept transplanting Elijah: From home, to Jezreel, to Cherith, to Zarephath. This transplanting made him stronger and stronger.



Elijah's Journey from the Wadi Cerith

For I have commanded a widow there to feed you. Widows were notorious for their poverty in the ancient world. God told Elijah to go to a Gentile widow and receive provision from her; it probably seemed to make more sense to wait beside a dry brook and to pray for rain but he did not.

When he was rejected by his own people, Jesus used this example of Elijah's visit to the widow of Zarephath as an illustration of God's right to choose a people to himself: *<<And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon>> (Luke 4:24-26).*

There are many examples of God performing miracles in the OT outside of the Promised Land or to Gentiles including: Calling Abram from a pagan land (Genesis 12:1); appearing to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2) and all the subsequent miracles he performed in Egypt and throughout the wilderness wanderings; and the healing of Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram who had leprosy in 2 Kings Chapter 5.

God later prophesied that his exiled people would be restored and would one day regain all of the Promised Land including as far north as Zarephath: <<*The exiles of the Israelites who are in Halah shall possess Phoenicia as far as Zarephath; and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the towns of the Negeb*>> (Obadiah 20).

<sup>10</sup> So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, ‘Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.’ <sup>11</sup> As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, ‘Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.’

### 1 Kings 17:10-11

A widow was there gathering sticks. This showed that she was a poor woman, gathering meagre scraps for firewood. All but the very poor would have had a ready supply of wood, perhaps purchased or bartered for, or brought to them by a family member or friend. Elijah perhaps thought that God would lead him to an unusual wealthy widow, but God led him to a genuinely poor Gentile widow.

Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink. Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand. Hospitality was very important in the culture and the woman would not have been surprised to be asked to provide something for the stranger, even to a foreigner: <<*Then the servant ran to meet her and said, ‘Please let me sip a little water from your jar’*>> (Genesis 24:17), and: <<*A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’*>> (John 4:7). She was ready to supply the drink but did not even have sufficient for herself and her son to spare any food for Elijah (v.12).

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “God told Elijah that he commanded a widow to feed the prophet. Yet this woman seemed unaware of the command. This shows how God’s unseen hand often works. She does not appear to have been at all aware that she was to feed a prophet. She went out that morning to gather sticks, not to meet a guest. She was thinking about feeding her son and herself upon the last cake; certainly she had no idea of sustaining a man of God out of that all but empty barrel of meal. Yet the Lord, who never lieth, spoke a solemn truth when he said, I have commanded a widow woman there. He had so operated upon her mind that he had prepared her to obey the command when it did come by the lip of his servant the prophet.”

<sup>12</sup> But she said, ‘As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.’

## 1 Kings 17:12

As the Lord your God lives. The woman was a Gentile but she recognised that the God of Israel is a living God and not a pagan idol. Yet he was Elijah's God and not her own.

I have nothing baked. Elijah quickly found out that she was not only poor, but desperately poor. Elijah found her right before she was going to prepare her last morsel of food for herself and her son and then they would resign themselves to the death from thirst and starvation they expected to naturally follow.

A little oil in a jug would again become the source of another of God's miracles, on that occasion helping a desperate widow through Elijah's successor; refer to 2 Kings 4:1-7.

<sup>13</sup> Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son.' <sup>14</sup> For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth.'

## 1 Kings 17:13-14

Do not be afraid. This was God's first word to the widow through Elijah. Her present crisis rightly made her afraid, and God wanted her to put away fear and replace it with trust in him. This is a statement of faith for those who trust in the Lord that they do not have to fear. Yet it is something that God has often had to tell even those who do believe in him: <<*After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great'>> (Genesis 15:1), <<But Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again'>> (Exodus 14:13), <<And you, O mortal, do not be afraid of them, and do not be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns surround you and you live among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words, and do not be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house>> (Ezekiel 2:6), <<Just as you have been a cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you and you shall be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong. For thus says the Lord of hosts: Just as I purposed to bring disaster upon you, when your ancestors provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the Lord of hosts, so again I have purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; do not be afraid>> (Zechariah 8:13-15), <<But when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do*

*not be afraid.’ Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded>> (Mark 6:49-51), <<Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid>> (John 14:27), and: <<For last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before the emperor; and indeed, God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you”>> (Acts 27:23-24).*

Go and do as you have said. Elijah makes no immediate comment to the widow about her despair and belief that she and her son are about to perish because of the famine. Instead, he asks her to do one apparently small thing first. Although it was actually an apparently outrageous request for it seemed he wanted a share in her all too meagre resources denying them part of their final meal.

First make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. Against all parental instinct, the woman is asked to give Elijah something to eat first, before feeding herself and her son. This was asking her for a great step of faith.

For thus says the Lord the God of Israel. Elijah is trying to persuade this destitute widow to trust in a God that she recognises but does not believe in. He wants her to know that the promise is not from himself but from the Lord. When the miracle is fulfilled then she will know that she can trust in the Lord God Almighty.

The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth. This shows why Elijah could make such an audacious request. It was because God had told him that he would provide a never ending supply of food for the widow, her son, and for Elijah himself. He asked the widow to put her trust in this great promise of God.

<sup>15</sup> She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. <sup>16</sup> The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.

### 1 Kings 17:15-16

She went and did as Elijah said. The widow actually did it - she willingly gave at great risk to herself and her, based on her trust in the promise of God. This in and of itself was a great step of faith given her circumstances.

So that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. God fulfilled the promise to the widow, her son, and Elijah. God used her as a channel of supply and her needs were met as a result.

The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah. God looks after people not only in Israel but also on the Phœnician coast: <<*he says, 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth'*>> (Isaiah 49:6), <<*Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also*>> (Romans 3:29).

Charles Spurgeon wrote, "Why did not God give her a granary full of meal at once, and a vat full of oil instantly? I will tell you. It was not merely because of God's intent to try her, but there was wisdom here. Suppose he had given her a granary full of meal, how much of it would have been left by the next day? I question whether any would have remained, for in days of famine men are sharp of scent, and it would soon have been noised about the city, The old widow woman who lives in such-and-such a street, has a great store of food. Why, they would have caused a riot, and robbed the house, and perhaps, have killed the woman and her son. She would have been despoiled of her treasure, and in four and twenty hours the barrel of meal would have been as empty as it was at first, and the cruse of oil would have been spilled upon the ground."

Spurgeon shows great insight here for this is the experience of modern humanitarian relief agencies who are often swamped when they bring supplies to a refugee camp or beleaguered area. Often much of the food is then spilt in the mayhem that follows rather than being distributed as required.

### V.a.iii 1 Kings 17:17-24 - Elijah Revives the Widow's Son

The woman's son died and she believed that it was because Elijah had come to her, reminding God of her past sins. He took the child to his room, prayed to God and lay on the child. The Lord answered his prayer, the boy's life was restored and he was returned to his mother. As a result the woman knew that Elijah was sent by the Lord.

<sup>17</sup> After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. <sup>18</sup> She then said to Elijah, 'What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!'

### 1 Kings 17:17-18

After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. The happy days of provision in the household of the widow can be imagined. Their needs were supplied by a continuing miracle of God. Yet those happy days were eventually covered by a dark shadow: the sickness and death of the widow's son.

The death of the son was a double blow to the widow. Not only did she suffer as any mother who loses a child, but she also suffered as one who lost her only hope for the future. The expectation was that her son would grow and provide for her in her old age. Now that expectation was shattered.

**What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!** The widow appears to have been convinced of the truth of Elijah's religion by the demonstration of God's power in vv.8-16. When death does eventually catch up with the family, she knows that it must be the Lord's doing; she blames God's prophet for reminding God of her sin. Elijah concurs with her view about who is the ultimate cause: <<*O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?*>> (v.20), but in his prayer he makes no comment on whether the widow's sin was the human cause. In a world where there is only one true God, everything must in the end lie in his power.

Even the apostle Peter at first believed that being in the presence of Jesus would cause harm because of his own sin: <<*But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!'*>> (Luke 5:8).

**Although such tragedies and suffering should not be assumed to be caused by the sin of an individual or even a community, it should always be recognised that all this have cause and effect. The cause is often the ways of the world that we choose to live in; the effect often falls on others.**

<sup>19</sup> But he said to her, 'Give me your son.' He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging, and laid him on his own bed. <sup>20</sup> He cried out to the Lord, 'O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?'

### **1 Kings 17:19-20**

**He took him from her bosom.** This vivid detail shows that the widow clutched the dead child tightly in her arms not willing to let the moment of his death pass.

**The upper chamber where he was lodging.** The term **upper chamber** refers to a temporary shelter or room on the roof, accessible from outside the house. Such structures are common in the Near East. This arrangement would allow the widow not only her needed privacy but would safeguard her reputation.

**He cried out to the Lord.** Elijah prayed with great heart and intimacy with God. He brought this seemingly unexplainable and irredeemable tragedy to God in

prayer. Since he knew God led him to this widow, Elijah laid this tragedy on God and asked him to remedy it.

**The apostle Peter simply prayed for the life of a widow in Joppa and she too was restored to life:** <<*Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, 'Tabitha, get up.'* Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up>> (Acts 9:40).

<sup>21</sup> Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the Lord, 'O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again.'

<sup>22</sup> The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. <sup>23</sup> Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, 'See, your son is alive.' <sup>24</sup> So the woman said to Elijah, 'Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.'

#### 1 Kings 17:21-24

Then he stretched himself upon the child three times. This was an unusual prayer technique, but Elijah had no precedent for this. It was not because of his prayer technique, but because of his faith that God answered this prayer. The purpose of this action is not made clear. Biblical prophets are often found 'acting out' as well as speaking, as seen in Ezekiel Chapter 4, and Elijah's actions here appear to be part of his prayer that the child's life should come into him again. This is the final illustration that the Lord is the only true God because it demonstrates that when faced with the 'god of death,' the Lord, unlike Baal, does not need to submit to him. He can cross the border from Israel to Sidon to bring life out of death. The Lord cannot be barred even from a place such as the underworld: <<*Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night', even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you*>> (Psalm 139:7-12).

**The apostle Paul was used by the Lord in a similar situation:** <<*A young man named Eutychus, who was sitting in the window, began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer. Overcome by sleep, he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead. But Paul went down, and bending over him took him in his arms, and said, 'Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him'*>> (Acts 20:9-10).

There is an almost irresistible desire to embellish on these wonderful accounts of the power of God. Patterson and Austel speak of one such attempt found in the Syriac translation, followed by Jerome, that the boy was the prophet Jonah. This is totally unsatisfactory and historically impossible since Jonah prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (793-753 BC). This is confirmed by: <<*In the fifteenth year of King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel began to reign in Samaria; he reigned for forty-one years. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher*>> (2 Kings 14:25), and: <<*Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai*>> (Jonah 1:1).

O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again is a prayer full of powerful arguments.

The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah. The son was raised and God provided for the widow on every level - not only with the miraculous supply of food, but also with the resuscitation of her son. There is no indication that the child was restored to life by some form of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). It can only be realistically attributed to an act of God.

Jesus, too, brought people back to life through the power of his Holy Spirit that can only be attributed to his miraculous works, including the restoration of **Jairus's daughter**: <<*He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement*>> (Mark 5:41-42); the return of another dead son to his widowed **mother**: <<*As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, 'Young man, I say to you, rise!' The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother*>> (Luke 7:12-15), and the raising of **Lazarus** who had been dead for **four days**: <<*So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go'*>> (John 11:41-44).

Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother. This must have been an amazingly emotional time. There are clear similarities here with the occasion when Elisha raises the Shunammite's son: <<***Elisha summoned Gehazi and said, 'Call the Shunammite woman.'* So he called her. When she came to him, he said, 'Take your son.' She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground; then she took her son and left**>> (2 Kings 4:36-37).

Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth. It now seems that true understanding of the power of God and the people he chooses to work through came to the woman. However, this does not mean necessarily that she became a true follower of the Lord.

Paul uses the phrase now I know in a way that explains just how difficult it is even for people who have such a revelation as the widow did here to fully understand God and to commit their lives to following his ways: <<***For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known***>> (1 Corinthians 13:12).