

Elijah

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[0 : 00] I'd like us to begin this evening a series of what, for want of a better description, we can call resurrection case studies. I want us to look at each of the occasions that are recorded for us in Scripture of the dead being raised to life.

Now, of course, it's not technically resurrection in the sense of our Lord's resurrection, because that is his resurrection body that he has when he rises the third day from the tomb.

And it is, if you like, a sort of heavenly, a new style body. It's the same body, but with different characteristics. What he has now is what we shall have when our bodies are raised from the dust and from the grave to be reunited with our souls at the last day, if we are in Christ.

What we have in Scripture is not technically, in that sense, resurrection. It is the raising up of the dead back to their old bodies and to resume their old life with all the mortality and with all the weaknesses and frailties and infirmities and constrictions of life in this fallen world.

Nevertheless, it is an unsurpassed miracle to have the dead raised to life in this world. And it is something that is, I would suggest, worth looking at.

[1 : 23] And the examples that we will look at in Scripture, there will be seven of them altogether. We won't take them all in absolute chronological order, but we are going to begin this evening with that which is chronologically the earliest in this.

And that is this raising to life of the widow of Zarephath's son through the ministry of Elijah. The context in which we find this raising to life of our son is the famine and drought that has come upon the land of Israel because of its idolatry.

Idolatry because it has turned away from the Lord. And Ahab, the king of Israel, has not only despised the Lord, but also, as we see again in chapter 16 there, it came to pass as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that is the setting up of the golden calves, in Dan, way up in the north, and in Bethel, near the border with Judah, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians.

In other words, Baal worshippers, and went and served Baal and worshipped him. So, not merely content with being indifferent towards the Lord, he actively went and pursued paganism.

We might say, for example, what is worse than somebody who is godless or indifferent? Somebody who may be nominally following the Lord is one thing, but has no interest in the Lord, that's one thing.

[2 : 47] But somebody who is actively pursuing paganism, and actively going after the worship of Baal, and setting it up, and making it the official state religion of the kingdom, that is infinitely worse.

This is one reason why, it's almost certainly the reason why Ahab is described as the worst of all the kings, in all the years that he reigned, that there was none as bad as Ahab.

Because his actions don't appear necessarily, in the terms of his reign and his kingship, to be as bad as some others. But because of his going after Baal, he is described as the worst, that there was none any like him before or after.

So, in this context, the Lord has done one simple thing, which he charges Elijah to tell Ahab about, that there's going to be a famine and a drought, and it is because of the sins of Israel.

And this is an instance of just how fragile our supposedly pompous, self-satisfying existence is. We think we are so strong. We think mankind is, you know, the tip, the pinnacle of the pyramid.

[3 : 56] We are the ultimate in this world. All God has to do is withhold a little thing like moisture. Withhold a little thing like dew or rain.

That's all he has to do. Just stop it from falling. Stop it from coming. The land dries up. There's no pasture for the flocks, so the beasts die. There's no crops to go, so people go hungry.

The water runs out in the brooks. It just dries up, so there's nothing to drink. So a real devastation begins in the land. And God has only done one little thing. He hasn't set earthquakes and fire and brimstone and lightning to destroy a people. He has just, as it were, turned off the supply of dew, the supply of moisture. That's all he has to do. One little thing. And suddenly mankind is completely helpless before him. But of course, because this judgment is sent on the land, Elijah, of course, is just as susceptible to it as everybody else.

[4 : 57] And the Lord says, he went and turned eastward. Go to the brook, Kenneth. Hide thyself by the brook that is before Jordan. It shall be thou shalt drink of a brook. I have commanded the ravens to feed thee.

In other words, these creatures of the heavens, the fowl of the air that the Lord has put into their instinct, into their mind, to bring precious food, bread, and flesh, wherever they got it from. And remember that ravens were unclean birds. That they bring it to Elijah and they feed him morning and night time with what they themselves gather. How are they suddenly doing this? Because God commands it. God, who has ultimate control over all things in creation, has commanded it. But of course, in due course, Elijah's water supply dries out. And so the Lord sends him to the last place anyone would look for him. Because they were looking for him. After the famine and the drought began to bite, we see in chapter 18, where Obadiah says to him, as the Lord, verse 10, As the Lord thy God will it, there is no nation or kingdom, whether my Lord, that is Ahab, hath not sent to seek thee.

[6 : 07] And when they said he is not there, he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. Now, Ahab is not seeking Elijah in order to kill him. But rather, because Elijah said there's not going to be any moisture or dew, but according to my word, he wants to find him, bring him back, and make him pronounce the word so that the rain will fall again.

He does not want to, he will have to take it, then he doesn't want to kill him. Because a dead Elijah cannot pronounce the word. And a dead Elijah cannot say, right, the rain is coming now, the Lord is going to turn it back on again.

He needs Elijah. He is searching for Elijah. He's probably not going to treat him too kindly when he finds him, but his object is to make him bring back the rain.

So he's been searching for it. But the last place he would think of looking is in his father-in-law's kingdom, in Jezebel's home territory. And this is where the Lord sends it, Go to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon.

And remember, we just read in chapter 16 at the end of verse 31, And Jezebel is from the kingdom of Zidon. Her father is the king of the Zidonians. So he is sent there where people will least think to look for him.

[7 : 22] Now, we read later on this chapter of how the Lord causes the barrel of meal not to waste and the poos of oil not to run out. We might think to ourselves, Well, why doesn't the Lord just cause the brook Kareth not to run dry?

Why doesn't he just keep the supply of water going there for Elijah? And then he can hide there in his cave or whatever it is for as long as he wants. And the ravens can keep bringing him the flesh and the bread morning and evening and so on.

And he can just keep being fed there. Why doesn't the Lord just do that? That would be simpler, surely. God has his purposes. His purposes that encompass not only Elijah, but also this royal woman and her son are part of God's plan of grace and mercy and redemption.

And he intends to involve them too. And so he sends Elijah to them. Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongs to Zaire and dwell there.

Behold, I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee there. He sends him then in the midst of famine, drought and famine there in Zarephath as well, to an impoverished widow woman.

[8 : 29] She's not just a wealthy widow. She's not a wealthy merchant or whatever with plenty of bread and food and supplies. No, no. But she's down to her last intended mouthful of food to be cooked over a fire for which as yet she doesn't even have any fuel.

She's going to gather a few sticks to make a fire, to cook together the meal and the flour and the oil and make one last little cake of bread. That's all she's able to do.

But the Lord says, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain me. God has commanded it, but as yet she knows nothing of it. And I would suggest to you that this commanding is in the

same way as commanding the ravens.

The ravens maybe don't understand why they are doing this. They don't realize, oh, this is the prophet of God. Let's bring him bread. Let's bring him flesh. Morning and evening and so on. But God commands it and they do it.

And the widow woman may not know exactly how it is that she ends up coming out to the gate of the city just when Elijah appears. She may not know, but almost certainly doesn't know all the reasons behind it all.

[9 : 32] But God has commanded it. In other words, the Lord is way ahead of us in all his works of providence and grace in the midst of our sorrows and struggles.

And let's not pretend that this isn't a struggle for Elijah too. You know, he has to live for two and a half years or three and a half years, however long the famine and the drought goes on.

And yes, my thing, well, it's all right for him. He's got food. How much food do you think ravens can carry in their beak? How much, you know, flesh or bread do you think they can actually can?

Even if there's puns in them. Twice a day, morning and evening. You know, a little pile of crumbs or whatever. Yes, it'll make a little meal of whatever they can bring. You drink the water from the group and then it runs out.

And in the strength of what you get there, you have to travel from the Brook Kennet, which is probably, you don't know exactly where it is, just to the west of where Javish Gilead is, to the east of Jordan.

[10 : 30] If you've got a map at the back of your Bible, that might help you to find roughly where it is. It's roughly sort of halfway between the Dead Sea in the south and the Sea of Galilee on the north.

Now, from there, he has to go on foot all the way northwest to Zidon, to where Zanaphath is, which is to the south of Zidon there.

Now, that's quite a journey. That's quite a journey when there's almost no water in the land, when there's precious little food. He's making a journey. He is going to be absolutely worn out and exhausted from it, without food, without much in the way of water, because there's famine and drought in the land.

So Elijah is suffering too. But in the midst of his suffering and this widow's suffering, God is way ahead of us. He already has it all perfectly under control.

We might say, why this particular widow? There must have been many such widows in Israel who would have been happy to look after the man of God, especially if they knew what the conditions would be, if their needs would be supplied.

[11 : 33] They might have been happy to board Elijah in their house. I would suggest to you perhaps, first of all, the very extremity of her poverty would be one thing.

God, remember, is glorified in doing the impossible. That for which people cannot say, oh yeah, well, that's the reason it might. Because, you know, okay, she said she didn't have much left.

You know, obviously there was just enough to eke out. No, there wasn't. She's saying, I've got nothing left but this little handful of meal, a little oil on my cruise, I'm going to make together one last little cake, flatbread, you know, cake of bread for myself.

My son will eat that and then we'll get nothing. We're going to die of starvation after that so we can eat it and then die. And we're going to die slowly and we're going to die of hunger. There's nothing else.

We've got nothing else. She's down to our last few mouthfuls of meal. The extremity of her poverty is such, God is glorified in the doing of the impossible.

[12 : 35] But also, I would suggest to you, perhaps more importantly, what we see at verse 12 where Elijah says, no, bring I free thee a morsel of bread in my hand. She said, as the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake but a handful of meal of a barrel.

Now, we're so used to people in the Bible talk about the Lord thy God living and people talking in terms of the Lord and thinking in terms of the Lord. Of course, that's what they said. That's how they spoke in those old-fashioned religious days.

Remember that she is not in the midst of Israel nor Judah. She is in the coasts of Tyre and Zidon. She is up in a pagan kingdom where Ethbaal, the king of the Zidonians, is a Baal worshiper to the nth degree.

This is a pagan kingdom where Baal worship is the state religion and yet, she says to Elijah, whether by being inspired by the Lord or whether she has a natural lingering respect for Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel, that this is how she addresses him, as the Lord thy God liveth. She recognizes that the Lord God of Israel is a living God. And she addresses Elijah with this respect, albeit resignation, in respect of his God.

[13 : 52] How she recognizes that this is an Israelite, how amongst all the thousands of Israelites she recognizes this isn't a Baal worshiper, this is a servant of the living God.

I cannot say, except that the Lord has commanded this widow to provide for Elijah. Perhaps she is already one who has a love and respect for the living God, the God of Israel. Perhaps she is the only one in Zarephath, a solitary voice of faithfulness, of integrity, in a kingdom of paganism.

And she has been reduced to her last mouth. Oh, the Lord has taken away her husband. He's taken away all her resources. She's got nothing left but this last handful of meal. She's down to her last resources.

And into the midst of her misery and poverty comes this stranger. Says, Bring me a little water. Yes, okay. Bring me a little water. And make me a little cake of bread. Well, look, I've got nothing left except, well, go and do it for me anyway.

[14 : 53] Because, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, The bad of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruise of oil fail until the day that the Lord sent his reign upon the earth.

And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah. Now that is faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. I would suggest to you, this woman had faith in the living God, the God of Israel.

She somehow is enabled to recognize in Elijah a prophet of the living God. She is almost certainly, if that is the case, the solitary representative in that pagan kingdom of those who love and fear the Lord.

One person, one destitute, impoverished widow. And to her, the Lord sends Elijah halfway across the country to undertake a difficult, long and arduous journey when it would probably have been easier just to keep the water flowing and the brute peril.

But instead, he sends Elijah there not simply to spare Elijah. Elijah is like, Oh, go to the widow because she'll feed you. She's got plenty of food. No, she doesn't. But the food that she has, she will put at your disposal.

[16 : 06] And as she feeds you, I will feed her. God has not just Elijah in view here. He has the widow and her son in view as well. God is way ahead of us. in all of these things.

Such is the sweetness of God's love and justice that such a faithful soul, so isolated in her devotion, would be thus remembered and blessed of the Lord.

Here she alone remains faithful in her pagan kingdom when Israel, who ought to be the Lord's people, have turned their back to them. Of course God is going to remember her.

Of course he is going to take note of her. And we see then her faithfulness in how she responds. With little resources, much is given by her, and so that little is blessed.

At the very least, to enable the good to continue being done. She is prepared to help and to feed Elijah. And because she's prepared to do it, God has commanded, and this is where, like with commanding the ravens, these, you know, dumb creatures, but still of God's creation, he commands them and they operate according to his command.

[17 : 19] God has complete control, not only of the living creatures that he has made, but of the very elements of creation itself. And the sense here, I would suggest to you, is that he has not only commanded the word, he veritably commands the meal and the oil itself, that it replenishes, that if it doesn't multiply in abundance, it's not something flowing over it, all the rooms of it and barrels of it, suddenly abundance where there was hardly any, but the hardly any just keeps on somehow miraculously lasting.

And because she is prepared to give her last meal to Elijah, that which she has keeps on lasting. Here we have that not only, as it were, the ravens obey the command of God, that the material resources themselves obey the voice of their creator and keep on replenishing.

In this woodland, it is clearly a measure of faith or at the very least submission to the Lord's will and command. She has little to give, Elijah, but if we have not the wherewithal to give to the distressed and needy, we must be the more ready to work for them.

And she is here. She can't say, oh yeah, there's plenty of water. She says, no, I'll go and get it for you. She goes and gets it for him. She makes him the cake of bread although she's hardly got anything left.

She's prepared to work to serve the Lord's representative there. Even though she's nothing to give, she's prepared to work. She goes to fetch the water. She makes him the food.

[18 : 55] We're reminded of the Silo-Phoenician woman that was referred to in our reading this morning in Mark. In Matthew's account, Jesus answered and said, and now remember this woman, the Silo-Phoenician woman, she's in the coast of Tyre and Zion in exactly the same part of the world where this little woman is feeding Elijah.

Jesus said, oh woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt and her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And this woman too, I would suggest to you is great of faith. Like the other widow, of course, who cast in her last two mites to the Lord, this widow now casts in the last of her precious meal and oil to make this food for Elijah.

But she doesn't lose by it. those that deal with the Lord must deal upon trust. That is how our relationship with the Lord must likewise proceed.

As we mentioned a minute ago, you know, in Hebrews, you know, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. We believe, we trust in a God whom we have not seen. You know, as Peter says, this trial of our faith, which it is a trial, you know, beloved, think it not strange concerning the final trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you.

[20 : 12] 1 Peter 4, 12. And we were to turn back likewise to chapter 1 of 1 Peter, saying that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than a gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen ye love.

We haven't seen, we've never set eyes of flesh upon him. And likewise, we must deal on trust with the Lord. Many people, all the Lord's people in truth, have found to a greater or lesser extent that they put their trust in him and that trust is repaid.

That trust is repaid abundantly and the more they invest in him, the greater their return back again. But they have to act on trust. Nobody is going to say, oh yeah, I'll give you all the evidence, I'll give you everything you want, I'll give you all the facts, so that's okay.

I'm not going to make a little jetty for Peter to walk on. If he wants to walk on water, he has to step out of the boat. If you want to have and see the miracles of God, you've got to venture in faith.

You've got to deal in trust. Those who deal with the Lord must deal in trust. And they will find that the Lord blesses. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

[21 : 27] And all these other blessings are added to them. We see, of course, that this is what God requires in the law as well. In the law of God, the Old Testament, the legislation there, it is the first fruits which are exactly just that.

The first in your crop you give to the Lord, you dedicate to. The tithes and offerings were to be drawn off first and given to the Lord. And then the rest of us dares to enjoy as they wanted.

And it should be so with us as well. Whatever may be our resources and our tithes and offerings, they should be drawn off first. From our wage packet, from our monthly or our weekly pay, whatever it should be, what is going to the Lord should be drawn off first.

And everything else after that, and God will honour and God will bless that which is given first to him, that which is dedicated, devoted to him.

Malachi, we read in chapter 3, verse 10, bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be meet in mine house and prove me now herewith, said the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

[22 : 36] Now you could say this widow woman, she doesn't get all such abundance that she's overflowing with meal and oil, but it never actually disappears. It ought to have. It should have disappeared.

It should have been used up ages ago, but it keeps on going. This widow received a prophet's reward because she received a prophet into her home and she obtained a prophet's reward.

She gave him all but the last of her food and in return the last of her food kept on lasting. She gave him house room and is repaid in turn with an ongoing supply of food for her house.

Having made one cake of bread for Elijah, she is repaid with an unending supply, an unending number of cakes of bread for herself and for her son.

So likewise, if you think about Abraham offering up his one and only beloved son, Isaac, on the altar, ready to lose him to the Lord if he had to, he not only received them back alive but was made in return a father of a multitude of sons, a father of many nations.

[23 : 41] Venture in faith and trust upon the Lord. Be prepared to give up what is your most precious thing.

Whatever it is, it is our little Isaac we may be holding on to our little last barrel of meal or our little last cruise of oil that seems too precious to part with.

What have you got to lose? It's not going to last anyway. Maybe that was partly what was in this woman's mouth. Well, there's partly anything left anyway. Whether I give him some just now or whether we eat it ourselves later on, it's not going to last.

We might as well share it. We might as well give it to the Lord at the end of the day. Fred, what have you got to lose? What shall the prophet a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

So yes, you have to deal with the Lord and trust, but in truth, what are you actually risking? I forget which missionary leader it was who said, he is no fool who risks that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

[24 : 44] We cannot lose if we deal in trust with the Lord and the Lord bless this woman's faithfulness. So, we come now to the death of her son, which is the point that we are dealing with that the raising of the dead.

It came to pass after these things, verse 17, that the son of the woman and mistress of the house fell sick. His sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him. It would seem that this illness came on him suddenly.

Either that or simply through the lack of variety of food or nutrients he was growing progressively. We could have that maybe entirely possible, but the likelihood is that this sickness came suddenly because there's no suggestion that the woman, you know, is anxious about her son's deteriorating health and says to Elijah, can't you pray for him or lay your hands on him or something?

Can't you do something? Do you breathe with the Lord? Do you restore him to life? That's what you would expect if he was so seriously sick and ill at death's door and so on. That would imply then that this sickness came on him suddenly.

that may not have been a single day, but the deterioration would have been rapid so that there is no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, what have I to do with thee all that man of God that come unto me to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my son?

[26 : 05] His sickness was so sore there was no breath left in him. Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom and carried him up into a loft where a board and laid him upon his own bed.

Now, you might say, oh, no breath left and he was just exhausted or he wasn't breathing but he was still alive. We don't read that because Elijah prays, I pray to let this child's soul come unto him again.

Now, if the soul has already departed, this child is dead. And the woman is talking about having slain her son when she had expected to die from hunger, she and her son both, there was a certain resignation, a certain calmness about it.

Well, we've hardly any food left and now we're just going to eat it and then we're going to die. And there was an acceptance of that. But now, having been given hope, having been given this expectation of protection and blessing and provision, death is the more bitter when it comes.

And yet, in the midst of it, she recognizes her own sinfulness, that despite the fact she shared everything she has with a prophet, with a stranger, she didn't say, that makes me a good person.

[27 : 18] I'm good, God, you bless me for this. But rather, she says, you know, you come to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my son. She knows the famine and the drought are punishment for sin.

If she didn't know before, Elijah would have told of this in conversation. So the loss of her son, the thing in her world that is most dear to her is surely, as she would see it, a punishment for her sin. Is that not how we so often tend to think something bad happens? But we don't say, oh, it's because I'm a sinner. We say, Lord, what have I done to deserve this? In other words, whatever I may have done, this is disproportionate for my sin.

I'm not bad enough to have been punished this way with the loss of whatever thing it might be which is most dear to us. The fact of the matter is that God has given for sinners that which was most precious to them.

He has given his only beloved son as a price to remedy for sin. There is nothing that we can say, oh, I don't deserve this. I deserve better treatment than this. None of us deserves anything at the Lord's hand.

[28 : 25] Had it not been for the Lord's divine intervention with Elijah, she and her son, would have perished of hunger ages ago, long ago, months, years ago, depending on how long has elapsed in this particular narrative.

But here we find now that her son has died and it is bitter to her and she takes it as this a punishment for my sins.

Have thou come to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my son? Now, of course, we know this is not God's intention here to punish her for any sin but rather to glorify his name and yet there is a lesson for a seer we should recollect and that is in one sense it is true enough that our sins are the death of our children.

I'll say that again. Our sins are the death of our children. If you remember what it says in the second commandment, you know, not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is the heaven above or the earth beneath and the waters under the earth and shall not bow down to thee and her servant for I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my demands.

Now, does that seem not fair? It's not really fair, is it? You know, to punish the children for the parents' sins? Oh, that's not righteous before God. What does that mean? I would suggest to you that what that actually means is that if the parents turn away from the Lord and go the way of idolatry as that commandment is forbidding or simply coldness or indifference or lukewarmness toward the Lord, then the children will see and they will take their lead from their parents.

[30 : 10] They are not going to become red-hot zealots for the Lord when their parents are setting an example of indifference and coolness and lukewarmness. They will follow what they're doing. Why should I have to do it?

You don't do it. Why should I do this? You don't bother to do this. Why should I follow who? You're not leading. Our sins become the spiritual death of our children because they will look at us and even if they will pretend, especially perhaps in teenage years or whatever, will pretend they want nothing.

They don't want to be like us. They want to be their own person. They want to do their own thing. They will nevertheless take their lead from us. However unconsciously, however unwittingly, the things that we do, they will follow.

Our turning away from the Lord. They won't rebel against their parents by suddenly becoming divine Christians. If the Lord converts them, then that's great. That's fine. But you make it that much harder for them, just as you make it harder for a child if you throw it into the deep end of the pool. Say, yeah, go ahead. See if you can swim. That's fine. But if you teach it to swim, first of all, it has a chance to survive. If you teach a child the things of the Lord, if you bring it up with the nurture and admonition of the Lord, it has the option to paddle about and swim or else to sink like a stone.

[31 : 29] If you don't give it that teaching, instruction, and guidance, it doesn't have the option. Our sins become the death of our children. When we turn away from the Lord, our children will follow where we lead.

And likewise, we turn to idolatry or to setting up other things as just as important as God or more important than God. Say, oh, yeah, you can be a Christian and do this and this and this and this. Oh, yeah, you don't have to do this. You don't have to be, oh, maybe we did that in a former age, but come on, we're more than we're sophisticated. We don't have to be like that. We don't have to be so strict. We can do this and this and this and have the Lord as well.

So there's one option among many. And they will follow one lead. One God amongst many gods. Set up the other idols as well. Well, visit this upon the fathers, upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

How many times will that godlessness reproduce itself? Look at the state of our society nowadays. Look at the state of the country.

[32 : 31] Look at the domestic wreckage and the social breakdown across our land. And if you look at any individual, you go back I would state, you know, if I were a betting man, huge amounts of money in this.

If you go back two, three, maybe four generations, you will find that any individuals, no matter how reprobate they may seem now, go back three, four generations, you'll find a grandparent, great-grandparent, great-great-grandparent who was devout and faithful, loved the Lord, went to church and observed as far as one could tell all the outward thoughts of faith in the Lord. How many generations does it take before it was lost? How long does it take before our sins become the death of our children and then our children's children and our children's children's children?

Because swimming upstream against the current does not come by nature. It may be divine intervention. It may be that that the Lord will do to redeem. But here we have this woman anxious, as thou come to visit my sins, to bring my sin to remembrance and to slay my son.

Prior to this incident, we do not read of any raised to life in Scripture. This is one reason we've begun with this instance tonight.

[33 : 50] It is the first such instance of any being raised from the dead in Scripture. Plenty of people killed, plenty of people die, and even one in the case of Enoch going to heaven without dying.

Of course, that's what happens to Elijah too. He goes to heaven without dying in the fullness of time. But none actually raised from the dead. What we also have here is that this is Elijah's first recorded prayer, believe it or not.

This chapter, chapter 17, it introduces us quite suddenly to Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah the prophet. We read of his pronouncing God's commandments to Ahab.

We read of him speaking to the woman, the widow in Zanafath. But we don't actually read any recorded prayer of his until now. So the very first recorded prayer of Elijah here is praying for a child to be raised to life.

My goodness, you're really swinging from the outside line there, aren't you, with your first opening prayer, raise the dead. And this is what Elijah is doing. Nobody's ever done it before in Scripture, and yet this is what he's asking for.

[35 : 01] They don't come any bigger than a request like this and yet he prays and yet he asks in faith. James tells us Elijah was a man of like passions with us.

He was just as sinful and fallen as we are but he prayed and the Lord answered and he prayed that it might not rain and the Lord withheld the rain. He prayed again and the rain came but more than that he prayed for this child's life and the Lord granted it.

He asks in faith but having asked in faith for this child's soul to return to him again and notice of course this is a recognition but obviously there is a recognition that there is such a thing as a soul living or continuing to exist apart from the body verse 21 let this child's soul come into him again he prays that it would return to him clearly then the child is dead.

It's not just he stopped breathing but he's unconscious he is dead and if he is dead then he will have begun to go cold already. A friend of mine a long standing friend of mine was present when his father passed away he was there at the bedside in the hospital and he's holding his hand as his father passed away and one thing he said to me when we spoke was that he said he was amazed just how quickly when the blood stopped flowing how quickly the flesh turned cold after his father had passed so this child if he is dead by the time Elijah is carrying him up to the loft where he is sleeping he will be stone cold he will be dead now remember to touch a dead body let you contract the ritual uncleanness Elijah is taking this uncleanness as it were upon himself he lies upon he prays to the Lord but he uses whatever the Lord has given him there's no suggestion it is the warmth of Elijah's body or his breath that brings this child back to life nevertheless he is giving him whatever he has to give such warmth as he has he gives to the child such breath as he has he breathes upon the child he's not under any illusions that he has the power to raise this child from the dead but rather he cries unto the Lord

O my Lord Lord my God I pray thee let this child's soul come into him again and the Lord heard the voice of Elijah and the soul of the child came into him again and he revived but Elijah having prayed did what little he could just as the woman in faith did what little she could she used the meal she had she used the oil she had she brought the water it wasn't much she could do but she did it this is a dead body Elijah can't do much but he prays to the Lord and then he stretches himself on it three

times such warmth as he has he's willing to give for the child such breath as he has he's willing to lay upon the child he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried unto the Lord oh my Lord my God I pray thee let this child's soul come into him and he did the soul of the child came into him again and he revived he gives what he has although only the

[38 : 24] Lord can give back life now when this child is raised again into life it is not something over which Elijah has any control but he asks and he receives and what is the end result is it that this woman says oh about time as well thank goodness so much for the Lord of mercy and compassion no this widow had needed no convincing about the truth of God the Lord what she says is now by this I know that thou art a man of God and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth she is reassured in herself that Elijah was indeed genuinely God's prophet she doesn't seem to have doubted the power and strength of the Lord so the death and raising again of her son was not simply to comfort her although it was for that too but it is for the glory of God and for the honour of his prophet a life is given and a lifetime's impression is made this boy if he lived to be a hundred would have been told and raised by his mother with the knowledge do you know how special you are son do you know that you were actually dead and this man of

God came from Israel and we fed him and we looked after him in our house for however many years it was and you actually died and he took you up to his loft and he prayed for you and he brought you back down alive you were restored to life you were dead son and the Lord gave you back to me this is something with which he will have this experience he will have this story will have been told for as long as he lived a life given back and a lifetime's impression made upon this woman and upon the son himself the physical provision not only of restoration to life but God doesn't just say look give me back the son that's it my servants are way off into the sunset now do for yourselves remember what Elijah had said this is what the Lord says that the barrel of meal shall not waste verse 14 neither shall the cruise of oil fail until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth now chapter 18 goes on to tell us about how Elijah is sent back to

Ahab and to say gather together the prophets of Baal 450 whatever they may be on Mount Carmel and then you've got the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal and then you've got the slaughtering of the prophets of Baal and then you've got Elijah says to Ahab go down eat and drink because there is a sound of an abundance of rain and then he goes up to the top of Mount Carmel and he looks out to see there is nothing and then he sends his servant seven times to out and he says oh there is a little cloud like a man's hand and all of this time when Elijah has long gone from Sarathath so it must be that the Lord continues to provide that the barrel of meal does not waste and the cruise of oil does not run out because it's not as long as I'm with you there will be plenty of food but rather until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth so even when Elijah is gone the Lord's provision continues God's mercy is not confined to the presence of any servant of his and this is something we should recognize many of us may have been blessed by the ministrations or by the work of the witness of some great servant of the

Lord some sermon we heard on a tape or something or some meeting we made about that oh Mr. So-and-so what a great servant of the Lord he was but the day will come when the Lord takes him away and the real test will be what provision does the Lord continue to make for my soul in the absence of his servant in the absence of the instrument that he has been used if it is the Lord then that blessing and provision will continue if it was just a mere man it will depart when he departs so because the Lord is really working through Elijah the provision for this woman does not end nearly when her son is raised and when Elijah goes off into the sunset but he continues to provide for her ordinary everyday needs and gives her son back to her as well the taking of this son in the first place was in order that he might be restored to her in order that

God might be glorified in order that a lifetime impression might be made upon the woman and upon her son that his name be glorified and that his prophet be likewise honoured because God allowed this poor soul this widow woman who had given everything to be brought down into such a depth of darkness she was able to be raised and her son was able to be raised and her witness was able to be raised