

2 Kings Lesson 4

2 Kings Chapter 4

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Memory verses for this week: *2Co 8:21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

Introduction: In last week's lesson, we covered the beginning of the reign of Jehoram, the son of wicked King Ahab. Elisha, the prophet, sternly rebuked the alliance that Jehoshaphat, the ruler of the southern kingdom of Judah made with Jehoram. In chapter 4, the focus turns to the life of and ministry of Elisha. The first portion of the chapter presents Elisha and the miracle of the widow's oil, the miracle of a son for the great woman of Shunem, and Elisha's raising that son from the dead. The chapter also contains the account of the healing of the poisonous pottage at Gilgal and his miraculous feeding of one-hundred men.

I. The Widows Increase of Oil

2Ki 4:1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

2Ki 4:2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.

The focus now returns to Israel (the northern kingdom) and more domestic events. The location is not noted, but it evidently was somewhere in the northern kingdom. The widow of the prophet is held by Jewish tradition to be the wife of Obadiah who had hid the fifty prophets in a cave in the time of Ahab. However, there is no scriptural basis for this.

She came and complained to Elisha how that she could not pay her creditor. The creditor sought to take her two sons to be sold into bondage to pay her debt. She reminded Elisha how her husband had feared the Lord. Upon inquiring of her, Elisha was told that all she had in her house was a container of olive oil.

2Ki 4:3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.

2Ki 4:4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

The prophet Elisha instructed her to borrow as many empty vessels as she could and then begin to pour the oil she had into them. She was to take her sons into

the house, close the door, and then begin to pour out her oil, filling each vessel. The prophet thus placed a test of faith before the woman. She could have rejected his advice claiming it to be impossible. To her credit, she did not. Sometimes when God speaks to us in our lives, we may not understand what he has planned. But like this lady, we should be obedient.

2Ki 4:5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out.

2Ki 4:6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

2Ki 4:7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

She did what Elisha told her to do. The borrowed vessels were all filled and there was none left to fill. As long as she had vessels to fill, there was adequate oil. Only when she ran out of containers into which to pour did the oil halt. Elisha directed her to go and sell the oil to pay her debt and then she would have enough left over to sell for a living.

This surely was a miracle from God. It is also is a lesson of faith and of God taking care of His people. God gives us strength to labor that we may live and grace in the absence of strength. Both strength and grace require faith. Even when we don't know where our next meal is coming from, we have a God who has promised to meet our every need.

Php 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

II. The Woman of Shunem and her Reward.

2Ki 4:8 And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

2Ki 4:9 And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.

2Ki 4:10 Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

2Ki 4:11 And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

The focus now turns to the town of Shunem which is located on the north side of the Valley of Jezreel, on the edge of the region of Galilee. Evidently, Elisha passed through Shunem from time to time. In that town was a great woman which likely refers to her faith and reputation. She urged Elisha to stop for a meal when passing through, which the prophet did.

In verse 9, the Shunammite woman suggested to her husband that they build a

prophet's chamber for Elisha to stay when passing through town. She proposed to fully furnish it for him as well. Elisha took them up on their offer and used their guest chamber when passing through.

2Ki 4:12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.

2Ki 4:13 And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

2Ki 4:14 And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

Elisha directed his servant Gehazi to inquire of the woman how he might return her kindness to her. He suggested recommending her to the king or other high officials. The woman answered modestly to the effect that she was content as she was. Elisha however was determined to do something for her. Gehazi reminded Elisha that this gracious woman had no children and her husband's was advanced in years.

2Ki 4:15 And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

2Ki 4:16 And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

2Ki 4:17 And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

Elisha directed his servant to call the Shunammite lady. Upon being summoned to the prophet, the woman only came to the doorway of his room. Elisha announced to her that at about that time a year hence, she would hold in her arms her own son. The woman apparently was staggered and could only blurt out for him not to lie to her. Soon after, she conceived and, after a full-term pregnancy, bore a son.

John Gill said this about the promise of the son:

2 Kings 4:16

And he said, about this season,.... In the next year: **according to the time of life**; the usual time women go with child: **thou shalt embrace a son**; in thine arms, that shall be born of thee, which she should have in her lap, and in her bosom:

and she said, nay, my lord, do not lie unto thine handmaid; or speak unto her what was not truth; it was so great, and so unaccountable, how it could be in her circumstances, that she could not believe it to be true, though she wished it might; or do not deceive me with vain and false words, or flatter me, jest with me, which would be unbecoming his character as a man of God, and prophet of the Lord; according to the Targum, she wished it might prove true, and she not deceived; see [2Ki 4:28](#).

2Ki 4:18 And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father

to the reapers.

2Ki 4:19 And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

2Ki 4:20 And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

2Ki 4:21 And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.

The child grows up and falls ill in the fields while out with his father. There is no indication how old this boy became. However, some years later, he fell gravely ill one day, complaining about pain in his head, while helping his father with the harvest. The father sent him to his mother. The lad died on his mother's lap about noon that day whereupon she laid him on the bed in the prophet's chamber, shut the door, and left.

2Ki 4:22 And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

2Ki 4:23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

2Ki 4:24 Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee.

2Ki 4:25 So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite:

2Ki 4:26 Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

2Ki 4:27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

The woman in her despair knew she must find Elisha. When we are at the end to worldly help, our only hope lies in the Lord. She asked her husband to prepare a donkey and a servant for her to go find him. He reminded her there was no special occasion for such a visit which was otherwise customary. She knew it, but prepared to go anyway. The woman headed out across the Valley of Jezreel as fast as she could go on her donkey toward Mount Carmel where Elisha was. From the heights, he saw her coming and noted it to his servant.

In verse 26, Elisha instructed Gehazi to "Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?" Upon being asked of her affairs, she modestly answered that she was well. The idea likely is that at least she at that moment was not in any danger.

However, upon meeting Elisha, the woman prostrated herself at his feet, taking hold of them. Gehazi sought to toss her away, but Elisha perceived her distress. He noted that God had not as yet revealed the trouble to him.

2Ki 4:28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

2Ki 4:29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

2Ki 4:30 And the mother of the child said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

The woman bitterly cried out, “Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?” She reminded Elisha that it was not her who had requested a son. And she also reminded him how she had directed him not to lie to her.

Elisha quickly perceived what had happened. He ordered Gehazi to go at top speed to where the child was and to stop for no one or nothing. Upon arriving, he was to place his staff upon the face of the child. The woman vowed she would not depart from Elisha evidently until he came to her son. Elisha likely sent Gehazi ahead because he was more swift of foot than the older prophet.

2Ki 4:31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

2Ki 4:32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

2Ki 4:33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.

2Ki 4:34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

Gehazi did as instructed but to no avail. He went and met Elisha with his negative report. Though possessing special power of God, it was not until Elisha prayed that God responded. A lesson remains to this day that we should never doubt the power of prayer. He then laid upon the child, pressing his body against the lifeless form of the boy. God answered the prayer of the prophet and the child’s body was brought back to life.

2Ki 4:35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

2Ki 4:36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

2Ki 4:37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Meanwhile, Elisha went down into the main house and paced back and forth, evidently still in prayer, and thought about the boy. He then returned and prostrated himself upon the boy again and this time the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. The boy was then presented to his mother who

took him to her quarters. However, before so doing, she fell at the feet of the prophet and then bowed before him in gratitude. God through Elisha had wrought a mighty miracle. He had honored this virtuous woman and her faithfulness to the Lord.

III. Poison in the Pot

2Ki 4:38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.

2Ki 4:39 And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not.

Thereafter, Elisha traveled to Gilgal which is in the Jordan River valley near Jericho. At Gilgal, there evidently was a school for the sons of the prophets. The sacred text notes that there was a dearth (i.e., famine) in the land. Elisha directed his servant (probably Gehazi) to prepare a meal of pottage (stew) in the large cooking pot there.

One of the sons of the prophets went out to find ingredients for the stew and found a wild vine with a type of gourds he did not recognize. He returned and cut up the gourds and placed them into the pot.

2Ki 4:40 So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof.

2Ki 4:41 But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.

When the pottage was served, it quickly became apparent that the gourds placed in the pot were toxic. They feared they would be poisoned to death. They therefore cried out to Elisha in despair. Elisha asked for meal which he poured into the pot. He then directed that it be served to the sons of the prophets. Miraculously, the poison herbs were neutralized and the stew no longer was toxic. The meal which is made from bruised grain speaks of Christ and the gospel. When the results of the cross are placed in the heart (the pot), it will remove the poison (sin).

IV. The First Fruit Offering of a Single Man used by Elisha

2Ki 4:42 And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

2Ki 4:43 And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof.

2Ki 4:44 So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD.

Once again, the greater context is of famine in the land. The implication is that the school for the sons of the prophets had nothing to provide for these young men. A man showed up from Baalshalisha which is in Gilead.

He came with the firstfruits of his harvest which amounted to twenty loaves of bread and un-threshed grain. It should be noted that a loaf of bread then likely was about the size of a large hamburger bun today. Elisha directed this food to be served to the people (i.e., the sons of the prophets).

Elisha's assistant made mention that this quantity of food could not feed one-hundred men. Nevertheless, Elijah directed him to serve them, noting that they would not leave hungry. "So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD."

After all of the men ate, there was food left over even as God through the prophet had foretold. Throughout this chapter we find famine and death are both present. Just because there is a famine does not mean there must be death. God gave Elisha power to make a difference. He gives you and I the same. You will not see it till it is exercised by faith.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.

