

2 Kings 4: Miracles Performed by Elisha

Part 1: Elisha and a prophet's widow.

Read 2 Kings 4:1.

1. What was the widow's situation after the death of her husband?

Read 2 Kings 4:2-7.

2. Does this remind you of another miracle performed by a previous prophet? (See 1 Kings 17:8-16.)
3. What was the widow's situation in that account?
4. How is Elisha's miracle similar to the one that was performed by Elijah?
5. Why did Elisha tell the woman to "shut the door behind you and your sons" before she poured the oil into the jars?
6. What was the final result of this miracle?

Part 2: Elisha and the Shunammite Woman

Read 2 Kings 4:8-10.

7. Why did the Shunammite woman build a room for Elisha? How was her situation different from that of the woman in the previous reading?
8. Why would Elisha make a habit of stopping by this woman's house?
9. How would you describe the Shunammite woman at this point in the story?

Hospitality played an important role in the lives of the people of the Middle East. Desert travel was strenuous, and Holiday Inns hadn't yet been invented. When travelers came to a town at the end of the day, they would stop at the town's center or near the town gates and wait for an invitation for the night. If no invitation came, they would spend the night outside. Spangler and Syswerda, p. 230.

Read 2 Kings 4:11-17.

10. What does Elisha offer to do for the woman to recognize her hospitality?
11. What does the woman mean when she says, "I have a home among my own people"?

12. What suggestion does Gehazi make? Why would this be important to the woman?

A note to verse 14 in the Concordia Self-Study Bible: A great disappointment because it meant that the family's name would cease and its land and possessions would pass on to others. It was also a threat to this young wife's future in that she faced the likelihood of many years as a widow with no provider or protector – children were a widow's only social security in old age.

13. What does the woman's response to Elisha's promise that she will have a son (verse 16) tell us about her feelings about having a child?

Read 2 Kings 4:18-27. Let's look at the reactions of the husband and the woman to the illness and death of their son.

14. How does the father react to his son's headache?

15. Why did the woman put her son in Elisha's room after he died?

16. The husband asks, "Why will you go to him (Elisha) today? It's not the New Moon or the Sabbath." What does this mean?

17. The woman responds, "It's all right." Later she tells Gehazi, "Everything is all right." Why does she say this?

Read 2 Kings 4:28-37.

18. Does this account remind you of an experience involving Elijah? (1 Kings 17:20-22.)

19. What was the significance of Elisha asking Gehazi to lay his staff on the boy's face?

20. Has your description of the Shunammite woman changed since we read question 9 earlier?

The crises of daily life can loom so large. The debt that hangs overhead. The worries about how we'll provide for ourselves or for our family if this or that emergency should arise. The sickness or death of someone we love. In the concerns we face, we hear the Shunammite's confession of faith echo down the corridors of time: "It's all right...Everything is all right," she says. How can she say that? And, more to the point, how can we say that in our times of trouble and grief? She and we can say it, because the Lord has already said it. Remember his gentle words of rebuke to Abraham and Sarah: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" In the cross of Jesus Christ and in His open tomb we see the ultimate proof that nothing is too difficult, nothing is impossible for our God. The One who could erase our sins, the One who could defeat Satan, the One who could die our own death and rise again can also now take care of His children's other needs and concerns. Roll your worries – big and small -- onto His shoulders today. Then tell yourself and the world with confidence, "It's all right. Everything is all right!"
Today's Light Bible, p. 519.

Part 3: Death in the Pot

Read: 2 Kings 4:38-41.

Read Leviticus 26:14-16a, 19-20.

“But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: ... I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze. Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit.”

21. What was an earlier example of God sending a famine? (1 Kings 17:1)
22. Why did God send these famines?
23. What was the purpose of the flour?
24. Does this miracle remind you of an earlier one – also performed by Elisha? (2 Kings 2:19-22)

Part 4: Feeding of a Hundred

Read 2 Kings 4:42-44.

Instead of bringing the firstfruits of the new harvest to the priest serving the golden calves at Bethel and Dan, godly people in the northern kingdom may have contributed offerings for the sustenance of Elisha and those associated with him. Thus they looked upon Elisha rather than the heathen kings and priests as the true representatives of their covenant God. (adapted from the footnote to 2 Kings 4: 42 in the Concordia Self-Study Bible, p. 531.)

25. Does this account remind you of miracles that will happen in the future?
26. Can you think of a theme that connects the four accounts in this chapter?

References:

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