



## Men's Bible Study Online Lesson 4/17/20

### 2 Kings 4

- 2 Kings 4: Elisha Performs Miracles
  - Verses 1-7: Elisha and the Widow's Oil
    - Verse 1: "one of the sons of the prophets" - This woman was married to a member of the band of prophets of whom Elisha has taken over leadership
    - Verse 1: "the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves" - "In the ancient world, financial indebtedness often led to slavery (cf. Neh 5:5; Amos 2:6)." (NIVZSB)
    - Verse 2: "a jar of oil" - A valuable commodity commonly used for cooking, cosmetics, lighting, and medicine." (NIVZSB)
    - Verse 7: "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on the rest." - God miraculously provided enough oil for the widow to not only pay off her debts, but to live on the rest. God's care and providence for the lowly and destitute (and the call for his followers to do likewise) is a major motif in Scripture.
  - Verses 8-17: Elisha, a Shunammite Woman, and Her Son
    - Verse 8: "So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food." - Hospitality towards people was an important cultural value in the ancient world.
    - Verse 13: "I dwell among my own people." - "The woman politely declines Elisha's offer, indicating that her family and clan can provide for her needs." (FSB)
    - Verse 14: "Well, she has no son" - "Not only is she barren, a social stigma, but she also faces the prospect of old age without any children to care for her or inherit the family estate."
    - Verse 16: "No, my lord, O man of God; do not lie to your servant." - This whole episode echoes Genesis 18 with Abraham and Sarah.
    - Verse 17: "as Elisha had said to her." - The prophetic word is certain. This is an important theme of Kings (2 Kgs 7:17; 1 Kgs 13:32) (NIVZSB)
  - Verses 18-37: Elisha Raises the Woman's Son
    - Verse 21: "she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God" - This seems to indicate she has faith that Elisha might be able to help.
    - Verse 23: "Why will you go to him today?" - "The woman apparently did not inform her husband that their son had died, perhaps desiring to spare him grief or fearing that he might deter her from going." (NIVZSB)
    - Verse 26: "All is well." - The woman offers Elisha's servant a polite reply, telling only the prophet the reason for her visit." (FSB)
    - Verse 28: "the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me." - Elisha is taken aback because prophets in similar circumstances in Israel's history had been forewarned (1 Sam 9:15; 1 Kgs 14:5). (FSB)
    - Verses 33-34: In an answer to the prophet's earnest prayers, the Lord gives life to the boy through Elisha's body. Elisha's ministry again parallels Elijah's (1 Kgs 17:17-24). (NIVZSB)
    - Verse 35: "The child sneezed seven times" - "Indicating that his breath had returned. The number seven is symbolic of completeness (compare Ruth 4:15; Job 1:2)." (FSB)
  - Verses 38-41: Elisha Purifies a Stew
    - Verse 38: "a famine in the land" - "In Elijah's day, the Lord demonstrated his superiority over Baal by withholding rain from the nation but providing for his own people (1 Kgs 17; 18:3-4).

Elisha continues this ministry of provision during a time of famine by healing a poisoned pot of stew (vv. 38–41) and multiplying loaves of bread (vv. 42–44).” (NIVZSB)

- Verse 40: “there is death in the pot!” - In desperate times the company of prophets ate an herb with potentially fatal consequences. Elisha’s curing of the stew recalls his healing of the bad water (2:19–22) and reflects the Lord’s recurring provision for his prophets (cf. 1 Kgs 17:4).” (NIVZSB)
- Verses 42–44: Elisha Feeds 100 Men
  - “In the context of a book about covenant faithfulness, a famine should be understood as divine judgment, particularly in an era characterized by apostate kings (Deut 28:18). While covenant curses on the land affected the Lord’s servants, the Lord brought relief through his prophet Elisha. Jesus’ feeding of the 5,000 parallels Elisha’s miracle in several ways, including the insufficient quantity of barley loaves, the question of the servant, and the presence of leftovers (John 6:1–13). Jesus’ miracle signified that he was a prophet like Elisha.” (NIVZSB)
  - Verse 44: “according to the word of the LORD.” - Once again the Lord’s word through his prophet is life-giving, in contrast to the famine conditions that result when the nation pursues alleged fertility gods (4:1–7; 1 Kgs 17:1–14). (NIVZSB)
- Lessons from 2 Kings 4
  - Sometimes the Lord does not reveal *how* he is at work in a particular circumstance, but we can trust that he is at work anyway.
  - Reflection questions:
    - Have you ever personally witnessed a modern miracle, or heard the story of one? What does that miracle reveal about the character of our God?
    - What miracle do you think you would most like to see God perform today? Why? Pray for that miracle.