

MIRACLES IN ELISHA'S MINISTRY

BIBLE TEXT : II Kings 4:1-44.

LESSON 310 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19)..

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Kings 4:1-44

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Widow's Oil

1. The Lord hears the widow and the fatherless, II Kings 4:1;

Exodus 22:22-24

²² Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

²³ If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry;

²⁴ And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

Deuteronomy 10:17-18

¹⁷ For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

¹⁸ He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

Deuteronomy 24:17-22

¹⁷ Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, *nor* of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:

¹⁸ But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence:

therefore I command thee to do this thing.

¹⁹ When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

²⁰ When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

²¹ When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean *it* afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

²² And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

Psalms 68:5

⁵ A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, *is* God in his holy habitation.

James 1:27

²⁷ Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father *is* this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

2. Elisha offers aid, II Kings 4:2.

3. Empty vessels are needed, II Kings 4:3;

Matthew 5:6

⁶ Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Isaiah 26:9

⁹ With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments *are* in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

4. The world is shut out, II Kings 4:4-7;

1 Kings 17:19

¹⁹ And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

Mark 5:40

⁴⁰ And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the

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

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.

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

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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

¹⁸ And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

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

²⁰ And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he

damsel was lying.

Mark 7:33

³³ And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

Mark 8:23

²³ And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

Acts 9:40

⁴⁰ But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

Matthew 6:6

⁶ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

II The Shunammite

1. She has regard for Elisha, the man of God, II Kings 4:8-11;

Romans 12:13

¹³ Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Matthew 10:40-42

⁴⁰ He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

⁴¹ He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

⁴² And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Matthew 25:35

³⁵ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Hebrews 13:2

² Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

2. "What is to be done for thee?" II Kings 4:12-17;

2 Kings 2:9

⁹ And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

1 Kings 3:5

⁵ In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

John 15:7

⁷ If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

3. She has faith, II Kings 4:18-26;

Genesis 22:5-8

⁵ And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

⁷ And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

⁸ And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

4. She has determination, II Kings 4:27-30;

Genesis 32:26

²⁶ And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

sat on her knees till noon, and *then* died.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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:

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.

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.

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

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.

³⁰ And the mother of the child said, As the LORD liveth, and *as thy*

Luke 18:1-8

¹ And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

² Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

³ And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

⁴ And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

⁵ Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

⁶ And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

⁷ And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

⁸ I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

5. She is rewarded by the restoration of her son to life, II Kings 4:31-37.

III Help in Time of Need

1. The deadly pottage is healed, II Kings 4:38-41;

Mark 16:18

¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

2. An offering is blessed and multiplied, II Kings 4:42-44;

Proverbs 3:9-10

⁹ Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

¹⁰ So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

Luke 9:13-17

¹³ But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

¹⁴ For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.

¹⁵ And they did so, and made them all sit down.

¹⁶ Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.

¹⁷ And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

Matthew 15:32-38

³² Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

³³ And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

³⁴ And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

³⁵ And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

³⁶ And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

³⁷ And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets full.

³⁸ And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

NOTES:

The Widow

God has promised in His Word that He will watch over the widows and fatherless. He has made it a part of pure religion "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). According to some of the ancient writings, this widow who

soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.
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.

³² And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, *and* laid upon his bed.

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

⁴⁰ So they poured out for the men

appealed to Elisha for help was the wife of Obadiah, the man who hid the prophets of God when Jezebel sought to slay them. Whether this be true or not, Elisha stood ready to lend a helping hand. He first inquired, "What shall I do for thee?" Then, without waiting for a reply, he inquired, "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."

Using What We Have

If we trace the miracles and mighty works of God wrought by His servants, we shall find many times they were brought about by the person's making use of that which was at hand. To Moses God said, "What is that in thine hand?" (Exodus 4:2). It was only a rod, but it became an instrument through which God wrought great signs and miracles. With his rod, Moses smote the river and it became blood. Cast upon the ground, the rod became a serpent; and then in his hand it became a rod again; and when it was stretched out over the sea, the waters divided and a path was made for Israel to cross over. An oxgoad was the instrument with which Shamgar slew six hundred men; and the jawbone of an ass was the weapon with which Samson slew a thousand men. Men of faith do not wait for mighty weapons, nor do they tarry until they can do some mighty deed; but using that which is at hand, they work at the task that lies before them. A widow of Zarephath had only a handful of meal and a little oil, but God used it to sustain her household and Elijah for many days.

A pot of oil seemed mighty little with which the widow, told of in our lesson, could face the future, when the creditors were already threatening to take her sons as bondmen. But the power of God is not limited; neither is His ear deaf to the cry of the needy.

Empty Vessels

"Go, borrow . . . empty vessels." God can fill **empty** vessels. Oil is typical of the Spirit of God, and empty vessels are typical of the hungry heart. The woman poured, and the oil did not cease until every empty vessel was filled. God today is filling empty vessels; just let a hungry heart come to Him and see how quickly He fills it. The trouble is that many vessels are so filled with pride and self that they must be emptied and cleansed before they can be used. Not one empty vessel – not one hungry heart – will go unfilled.

In Secret

"And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee." When we are in distress or need, it is good to shut the world out, and shut ourselves in with God. Jesus said: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:6).

It all seemed very simple for Elisha to tell them to go borrow empty vessels and then to shut the door and start pouring out the oil. But did you every try it? We are not told that Elisha prayed about it, but don't you think that Elisha, too, entered his closet and shut the door and began to prevail before God that the oil would be increased? We read that Elijah stood before Ahab and declared that there would not be dew nor rain for years. The original account does not say that he prayed, but James tells us in the New Testament, that he prayed earnestly that it might not rain. Our God is a miracle-working God, but his servants must prevail.

The Dead Raised

Elisha prayed on another occasion, although we are not told what the words of his prayer were. This time a dead child lay

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*.

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.

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.

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*.

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

QUESTIONS

1. Why was a pot of oil selected as the medium for providing for the widow?
2. On what other occasion was oil multiplied miraculously?
3. Of what are empty vessels a type?
4. Name some of the things that the Shunammite who was called a "great woman" did.
5. How was she rewarded for her deeds?
6. How was her faith demonstrated?
7. List the miracles of the Bible which were wrought behind closed doors.
8. What was the condition in the land when the pottage was healed?
9. Compare the feeding of 100 men by Elisha to similar miracles wrought by Christ.

upon his bed. "He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD." He stretched himself upon the child, and then with agony of soul he walked to and fro in the house. No doubt the Spirit made intercession, as the Apostle Paul said, "with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). You might know that it was a deep earnest prayer that brought the dead to life that day.

This child was the only son of a great woman who furnished a room and provided meals for Elisha when he passed that way. When the child died she placed him, with faith, upon Elisha's bed. When she asked for an ass to ride to go after the man of God, she did not tell her husband the child was dead. To his question as to why she wanted to go to the man of God, she, with faith, replied, "It shall be well."

When Elisha's servant, Gehazi, went to meet her and asked, "Is it well with the child?" she again replied, "It is well." However, when Elisha sent Gehazi to lay his staff upon the child she said to Elisha, "As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave the." In this hour of distress, she looked to the man who had power to fill the empty pots with oil. She wanted the holy man of God to help pray her through this deep trial. Her perseverance and faith, coupled with that of Elisha, brought forth life from the dead. She was one of those women referred to in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews who through faith received their dead raised to life again. Faith accomplishes the seemingly impossible.

Filling the Need

As it was in the miracles of Christ, the miracles of Elisha were wrought because of a heart of compassion to fill a need. The widow's oil was not increased for a demonstration to the curious, nor was the Shunammite's son brought to life for publicity purposes, for both miracles were wrought behind closed doors. When Elisha told his servant to boil a vegetable stew for the sons of the prophets, it was a time of famine. From the circumstances it is evident Elisha healed the pottage because of a shortage of food, and not to make a show of his power with God. When Jesus said, "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (Mark 16:18), He did not intend that His followers should tempt God by deliberately handling snakes or drinking poison. If by accident a Christian drinks poison or is bitten by a snake, he has this promise of God's protection.

When a man brought of the firstfruits and presented them to Elisha, his heart went out immediately to the people who were short of food. His heart was akin to that of Jesus who said: "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat" (Matthew 15:32). The servant of Elisha, like the disciples of Christ on another occasion, wondered how so little could be divided among so many, but Elisha had been talking to God about it. The Lord told him, "They shall eat, and shall leave thereof." God is good to His people to supply them bread in time of need. "They did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD."

10.