

## Lesson 35: The Excellent Adventures of Elijah and Elisha, pt 2

In Lesson 34, we were introduced to two of God's Superheroes, Elijah and Elisha. Unfortunately, I don't have time to go into all that Elisha did, but I think by the time we finish today's lesson, you'll think that Elisha was a pretty amazing prophet. You didn't want to mess with Elisha as we'll discover in a few minutes. But before we do, let's review last week's Lesson 34, The Excellent Adventures of Elijah and Elisha, pt. 1

1. Which husband and wife duo are said to be the most vilified and evil rulers in the Bible? **Ahab and Jezebel.**
2. Amos 3:7 says that surely God does nothing without revealing his \_\_\_\_\_ to his prophets. **Secrets.**
3. Who confronts Ahab and Jezebel after they have executed their neighbor Naboth and stolen his property? **Elijah.**
4. What does Elijah tell Ahab will happen to him as God's judgment on his sin? **In the same place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, they will lick up Ahab's blood.**
5. Did this happen? **Yes**
6. When God commanded Elijah to visit the widow of Zarephath, He said that she would provide for him. What was the widow's financial situation at the time of Elijah's visit? **She was poor and only had enough food for one more meal. Then, she and her son were going to prepare to die.**
7. Why did Elijah ask her to make a meal for him using the last of her ingredients? Wasn't this selfish? **No, it was a test of her faith and as she obeyed, using the last of what she had to give to the man of God, she was blessed and her grain and oil was multiplied so that it lasted throughout the drought.**
8. When Elijah calls for a contest between himself and the 850 false prophets of Baal and Asherah, what does say to the prophets as they are trying to get their gods to answer and do something? **He ridicules them and mocks their gods, saying that maybe they are asleep, or going to the bathroom or away on a trip and can't answer.**
9. What does Elijah do to the sacrifice to show that God can do the impossible and that nothing is too hard for the Lord? **He orders water poured on the sacrifice three times to show that God can set fire to wood that is totally soaked.**
10. When Elijah travels to Mount Horeb, how does God speak to him? **In a small whisper.**
11. During this time of evil, did God know those who had not bowed down to worship the gods of Baal and Asherah? **Yes**
12. How many refused to bow down to worship the false gods of Baal and Asherah? **7000.**

### A. The Call of Elisha

**Theme: He who is faithful in little things will be faithful in much. He who is faithful in little things will be given greater authority and responsibility by the Lord.**

As Elijah was nearing the end of his ministry, God directed him to anoint a younger man named Elisha to take his place. Elisha, son of Shaphat, was from the Jordan Valley (1 Kings 19:16). After a few years of training, Elisha would become God's spokesman to the northern kingdom—the 10 northern tribes known as Israel. Elisha's ministry would consist of signs and miracles, proclamations and warnings. He would become known as the prophet of peace and healing.

Elisha whose name means "El [God] is salvation"). Elisha was a farmer who lived with his parents. Since he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen when Elijah met him, scholars have suggested that his father was a wealthy landowner.

### **Let's read about Elisha's call in 1 Kings 19:19-21 (GW)**

<sup>19</sup> Elijah found Elisha, son of Shaphat. Elisha was plowing behind 12 pairs of oxen. He was using the twelfth pair. Elijah took off his coat and put it on Elisha.

<sup>20</sup> So Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and mother goodbye. Then I will follow you." "Go back," Elijah answered him. "I'm not stopping you."

<sup>21</sup> Elisha left him, took two oxen, and butchered them. He boiled the meat, using the oxen's yoke {for firewood}. He gave the meat to the people to eat. Then he left to follow and assist Elijah.

Elijah was divinely directed by God to seek his successor, and Elijah found Elisha out in a field plowing on his father's farm. Elijah placed his coat on Elisha's shoulders, and Elisha apparently understood this symbolic act as being appointed to the role of a prophet. Without hesitation, Elisha accepted the call to service, leaving the comfort of his family and home to follow a less predictable life that would require personal sacrifice (1 Kings 19:19-21). Elisha asks to go and kiss his father and mother good-bye. And this good-bye involved taking two oxen, butchering them and throwing a farewell feast as his way of saying good-bye. He also butchered two of his oxen which was basically saying that he was no longer going to be a farmer plowing the fields. This was a pretty gutsy move because he's staking his entire livelihood and future on this elder prophet named Elijah. And at this point, the future was very unpredictable. He had no idea what was in store for him or Elijah. But one thing he'll take with him from his time as a farmer. He will put his hand to the plow and not look back.

Elisha began his ministry as Elijah's student and personal attendant. The young man would first prove himself faithful in small things, such as the humble duty of pouring water on the hands of Elijah (2 Kings 3:11). Elisha's training under Elijah would gradually prepare him for a work that he would one day take up alone.

There's a principle here in God's school of hard knocks. So often, God starts us out in kindergarten and tests us to see if we are faithful in the little things, like pouring water on the hands of the prophet.

### **Jesus said in Luke 16:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

In the parable of the ten talents, Jesus said to the one servant:

'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' (Luke 19:17).

Jesus was saying to the servant that he was faithful with just a small thing, and because of that, his master gave him authority over ten cities.

I remember when I was just a teenager and was working one of my first jobs as a bus boy at a restaurant. Many of the other busboys and waitresses would wipe the tables down with cold, dirty dishwater which would often leave a greasy film on the tables. I was tempted to do that as well because sometimes we so busy, it seemed like a major pain to go and get hot soapy water. But, the Lord spoke to me about how this was a little thing and I could either do the right thing, or take a short cut which would

be disobedience. I chose to go and get hot, soapy water every time I discovered the water container to be cold and dirty.

God's training in our lives involves being faithful in the little things, and that's what we find here with Elisha.

## **B. The School of the Prophets**

We first encounter the school of prophets during the time of King Saul, who sends messengers to arrest David. When these men encountered a company of prophets under Samuel's leadership, the king's men also prophesied. This happened three times. Saul himself then went, and he, too, prophesied, leading people to ask, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Samuel 19:24), which became a saying in those days.

Then, we read in 2 Kings 2 where Elijah is traveling with Elisha, and a group of prophets from Bethel tells Elisha that Elijah would be taken from him that day (verse 3).

Let's read:

### **2 Kings 2:1-14 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.

<sup>2</sup> And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

<sup>3</sup> And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet."

<sup>4</sup> Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho.

<sup>5</sup> The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet."

<sup>6</sup> Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.

<sup>7</sup> Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan.

<sup>8</sup> Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

<sup>9</sup> When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me."

<sup>10</sup> And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so."

<sup>11</sup> And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

<sup>12</sup> And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

<sup>13</sup> And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

<sup>14</sup> Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the

LORD, the God of Elijah?” And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

Elijah rolls up his coat, and strikes the water so that he and Elisha can walk across the Jordan on dry ground. This is reminiscent of Moses parting the Red Sea. Elijah asks Elisha, “What shall I do for you before I am taken from you?” Elisha asks for a double portion of the Spirit that is resting on Elijah. He wants twice the anointing that Elijah has. Now this shows some chutzpah on Elisha’s part. Chutzpah is Yiddish for audacity or flagrant boldness. Well, most definitely, Elisha is making a bold move with this request.

Elijah tells him that he’s asking for a hard thing. But, Elijah, says, “If you see me taken from you, then you shall have what you’ve asked for. If you don’t see me, then forget it. Sorry. Ain’t gonna happen.” Well, Elisha DOES see Elijah taken up to heaven in chariots of fire and he receives double the anointing that Elijah had.

Let’s read what happens next:

### **2 Kings 2:15-18 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

<sup>16</sup> And they said to him, “Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men. Please let them go and seek your master. It may be that the Spirit of the LORD has caught him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley.” And he said, “You shall not send.”

<sup>17</sup> But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, “Send.” They sent therefore fifty men. And for three days they sought him but did not find him.

<sup>18</sup> And they came back to him while he was staying at Jericho, and he said to them, “Did I not say to you, ‘Do not go’?”

A group of 50 prophets come up to Elisha after Elijah is taken up into heaven on the chariots of fire, They urge him to let them go and look for Elijah. Well, Elisha knows very well where Elijah is. He’s been taken up to heaven and he’s nowhere to be found there in the Jordan Valley. But the prophets keep hammering him with requests to go and look for Elijah. Finally, Elisha relents and says, “Fine, go look for him. So the 50 prophets spend the next 3 days looking for Elijah which, of course, they didn’t find, and they came back and reported to Elisha that they were not able to find Elijah. Well, duh. You think?!! Elisha says, Didn’t I tell you not to go. Didn’t I tell you not to waste your time? But, Noooo...you wouldn’t listen. You had to find out the hard way.”

Alright, so Elisha didn’t exactly say it in those terms but he meant the same thing. Here’s what we learn here. This school of prophets doesn’t exactly give Elisha the respect that he deserves. They still see him as Elijah’s understudy, as being a school boy in training. But, now, they learn the hard way, that they had better start listening to Elisha who is now in charge.

### **C. Elisha and the Healing of the Waters**

While **Elisha** was still in Jericho, word about him had spread so that all **the citizens of the city** knew of Elisha's power. The leading **men** came to him with a practical problem that gave him opportunity to demonstrate the Lord's desire and ability to bless the people. Jericho had many natural advantages since it was located in a fertile area of the Jordan Valley. **But the water** from a major spring had turned **bad**, perhaps brackish, and when used for irrigation it killed the crops rather than nourishing them. The

parallelism between this physical situation and the spiritually polluting influences of Baal worship in Israel is obvious.

I remember when my wife and I had just been married. One of the first places that we lived at was an apartment on the edge of Brockport, NY. It was an upstairs' apt in a flat, rural area, and our landlady was a Jehovah's Witness. But here's what I especially remember about living in this apt for over a year. The water was BAD. It was polluted with sulphur. You could NOT drink the water—enough of it would probably kill you. It was only good for flushing the toilet or taking a shower. We had to purchase drinking water and haul gallon jugs up to our apt. weekly. Well, that's something like what Elisha encounters here in Jericho. The water is just plain bad. Nasty. You can't drink it.

Let's read about how Elisha solves this problem.

### **2 Kings 2:19-22 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> Now the men of the city said to Elisha, "Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful."

<sup>20</sup> He said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him.

<sup>21</sup> Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, "Thus says the LORD, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it."

<sup>22</sup> So the water has been healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.

Elisha's solution, given by **the LORD**, was designed to teach the people as well as to relieve their immediate distress. The **new bowl** represented himself, the new instrument in God's hand. **Salt** was known by the Israelites to preserve and purify; it was used in each of their daily grain offerings to the Lord. But here's the rub—when you add salt to water, it normally makes the water worse.

Seawater is toxic because your body fails eventually when it has to try to get rid of the salt that comes from sea water. There are countless stories of crewmen from ships during WWII who were at sea in life rafts after their ships were sunk by enemy torpedoes. After a number of days at sea with no food or water, men would become delirious and dehydrated. They would start to drink the sea water in an attempt to quench their thirst. Drinking seawater actually increases your thirst and dehydration.

However, when the salt was put into **the Jericho water** the situation miraculously improved. This miracle showed the people of Jericho that the Lord, not Baal, the so-called god of fertility, could heal their barrenness. God's permanent work on the spring would serve as a perpetual reminder of His ability to bring fruitfulness and blessing out of the barrenness and sterility caused by idolatry. Elisha's miracle displayed that God can use that which would normally make the situation worse to bring healing and restoration. God can bring healing and restoration to our lives, even in the most bitter of circumstances.

### **D. Elisha and the Bad Boys of Bethel**

**Theme: God is all-powerful**

**Theme: God is holy and righteous. He demands death as the payment for sin.**

**Theme: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**

As **Elisha** was traveling from Jericho **to Bethel** several dozen **youths** (young men, not children) confronted him. Perhaps they were young false prophets of Baal.

Let's read what happens next.

## 2 Kings 2:23-25 (NLT)

<sup>23</sup> Elisha left Jericho and went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, a group of boys from the town began mocking and making fun of him. “Go away, baldy!” they chanted. “Go away, baldy!”

<sup>24</sup> Elisha turned around and looked at them, and he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of them.

<sup>25</sup> From there Elisha went to Mount Carmel and finally returned to Samaria.

As **Elisha** was traveling from Jericho **to Bethel** several dozen **youths. These were young men, not children, and they confronted Elisha.** Perhaps they were young false prophets of Baal. Their jeering, recorded in the slang of their day, implied that if Elisha were a great prophet of the Lord, as Elijah was, he should **go on up** into heaven as Elijah reportedly had done. They called him “baldy” which was their way of making fun of him because baldness was not desirable. It was customary for men who were bald to cover their heads. So basically, they regarded God’s prophet with contempt.

Elisha then **called down a curse on** these bullies. This cursing stemmed not from Elisha's pride but from their disrespect for **the LORD** as reflected in their treatment of His Agent. God used wild animals to execute His judgment. These **42** men were **mauled** by the **two bears** which sends the message to everyone else that you don’t mess with God or his prophet.

## E. The Oil for the Prophet’s Widow

Theme: With God, nothing is impossible.

Theme: God is sovereign and supreme. He is all-powerful.

Elisha’s second recorded miracle granted an impoverished family of faith a financial blessing. A student of one of the religious training centers died and his wife became a widow. She was very poor and owned just one marketable item of value, a jar of olive oil. She had two sons to care for, and she asked Elisha to help her as she feared her sons would be taken away to pay a debt.

Let’s read what happens next in **2 Kings 4:1-7 (NLT)**

<sup>1</sup> One day the widow of a member of the group of prophets came to Elisha and cried out, “My husband who served you is dead, and you know how he feared the LORD. But now a creditor has come, threatening to take my two sons as slaves.”

<sup>2</sup> “What can I do to help you?” Elisha asked. “Tell me, what do you have in the house?” “Nothing at all, except a flask of olive oil,” she replied.

<sup>3</sup> And Elisha said, “Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors.

<sup>4</sup> Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting each one aside when it is filled.”

<sup>5</sup> So she did as she was told. Her sons kept bringing jars to her, and she filled one after another.

<sup>6</sup> Soon every container was full to the brim! “Bring me another jar,” she said to one of her sons. “There aren’t any more!” he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing.

<sup>7</sup> When she told the man of God what had happened, he said to her, “Now sell the olive oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on what is left over.”

**Elisha** was eager to **help** the widow. His miracles, as contrasted with Elijah's, frequently involved meeting the needs of individuals. Her **little** bit of **oil** was olive oil used for food and fuel. **Elisha** told her to collect **empty jars**; they would be **filled** with oil God would provide. The widow's faith can be "measured" by the number of **jars** she collected in response to the prophet's instructions. Shutting **the door** provided privacy for the task of pouring the **oil**.

Not everyone was to see the miracle take place; only the widow **and her sons**, the direct beneficiaries of God's grace, should see it. But later she probably told all her friends about God's miraculous provision. God provided oil enough to fill **all the jars** the woman had collected, all she felt she needed. She returned to Elisha with a report of the miracle and he told her to **sell the oil and pay her debts**. There was enough money **left** over for her to **live on** after all her financial obligations had been met. Elisha is called a **man of God**, a term used of several prophets in 1 and 2 Kings.

This story demonstrates God's care for His faithful ones who lived in apostate Israel at this time. Widows were always vulnerable and the widow of a prophet would have been even more needy. Yet God miraculously cared for this faithful, dependent believer.

Psalm 138:6 says "For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly, but the proud and haughty he knows from afar." In other words, those who are lowly like this widow have the ear of God. He cares about them.

## F. Elisha and the Shunammite woman

**Theme: With God, all things are possible.**

God's concern for women and their special needs can be seen clearly in both the preceding and this incident. Whereas women were regarded as inferior to men in most ancient Near Eastern societies, God showed His concern for them here as well as in many other places in the Bible.

Elisha the prophet often stayed at the home of this childless couple, as his ministry would take him from town to town. As a gesture of appreciation for their hospitality he prophesied that they would have a son who would bring them great joy.

Let's read **2 Kings 4:8-17 (NLT)**

<sup>8</sup> One day Elisha went to the town of Shunem. A wealthy woman lived there, and she urged him to come to her home for a meal. After that, whenever he passed that way, he would stop there for something to eat.

<sup>9</sup> She said to her husband, "I am sure this man who stops in from time to time is a holy man of God.

<sup>10</sup> Let's build a small room for him on the roof and furnish it with a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp. Then he will have a place to stay whenever he comes by."

<sup>11</sup> One day Elisha returned to Shunem, and he went up to this upper room to rest.

<sup>12</sup> He said to his servant Gehazi, "Tell the woman from Shunem I want to speak to her." When she appeared,

<sup>13</sup> Elisha said to Gehazi, "Tell her, 'We appreciate the kind concern you have shown us. What can we do for you? Can we put in a good word for you to the king or to the commander of the army?'" "No," she replied, "my family takes good care of me."

<sup>14</sup> Later Elisha asked Gehazi, "What can we do for her?" Gehazi replied, "She doesn't have a son, and her



husband is an old man.”

<sup>15</sup> “Call her back again,” Elisha told him. When the woman returned, Elisha said to her as she stood in the doorway,

<sup>16</sup> “Next year at this time you will be holding a son in your arms!” “No, my lord!” she cried. “O man of God, don’t deceive me and get my hopes up like that.”

<sup>17</sup> But sure enough, the woman soon became pregnant. And at that time the following year she had a son, just as Elisha had said.

In contrast with the poor widow in the previous story this **woman in Shunem** (near Jezreel) was **well-to-do** and had a **husband**. **Elisha** evidently **stopped** at her house regularly at her invitation as he traveled between Samaria, Jezreel, and other cities.

Now this woman's faith in Yahweh is seen in her desire to be a blessing to the **man of God**. Apparently she was more spiritually sensitive and social than her husband, but to be fair, he did agree to his wife's proposal to build a guest **room on the** typically flat **roof** of their house and to furnish it for Elisha's comfort.

Now, after **Elisha** had enjoyed this couple's hospitality for some time he wanted to do something for them in return. He asked **his servant Gehazi** to express his offer to the woman. Perhaps this was to make the woman feel more inclined to ask for something than she would have if the prophet addressed her. God's grace to His faithful ones can be seen in Elisha's offer. Elisha obviously enjoyed a position of some influence in the palace even though he opposed Joram's religious policies. The woman's response to Elisha's servant, Gehazi by saying that she has a home among her own people, which meant that she was well-taken care of and had no needs. This answer expresses her content with where she is at in life. She was at peace and did not have any special needs. How remarkable is that? How many people do you meet who are content with where they're at in life and they are at peace with God and themselves?

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian church that “he had learned to be content in whatever situation he found himself in.” (Phil. 4:13). In other words, contentment, to Paul's way of thinking was something that could be nurtured and learned. I think the starting point for contentment is to focus our eyes on Yahweh, Almighty God. When we realize that He is in control of everything and that He is working out his will and good pleasure in our lives, we can begin to rest in peace and contentment that God has everything under control.

Well, Elisha is determined to return her favors, so he talks with **Gehazi** after she left his room and he's asking Gehazi what he might do **for her**. Gehazi observed that **she** had **no son** and probably never would have one since **her husband** was **old**. **Upon hearing this, Elisha** called **her** back and told **her** that she would have **a son** in **about a year**. This miraculous birth would be God's gift to her for her goodness to His servant. The woman's response to this announcement does not mean that she did not want a son; every Israelite woman did. To be childless was regarded in Israel as a great personal tragedy. Her reply indicates that she felt having a son was impossible. She urged Elisha not to build up her hopes only to disappoint her later.

But, just as Elisha had promised, a year later, she does have a son, just as Elisha had promised.



## Tragedy Strikes

### Let's read 2 Kings 4:17-31 (NLT)

<sup>17</sup> But sure enough, the woman soon became pregnant. And at that time the following year she had a son, just as Elisha had said.

<sup>18</sup> One day when her child was older, he went out to help his father, who was working with the harvesters.

<sup>19</sup> Suddenly he cried out, "My head hurts! My head hurts!" His father said to one of the servants, "Carry him home to his mother."

<sup>20</sup> So the servant took him home, and his mother held him on her lap. But around noontime he died.

<sup>21</sup> She carried him up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, then shut the door and left him there.

<sup>22</sup> She sent a message to her husband: "Send one of the servants and a donkey so that I can hurry to the man of God and come right back."

<sup>23</sup> "Why go today?" he asked. "It is neither a new moon festival nor a Sabbath." But she said, "It will be all right."

<sup>24</sup> So she saddled the donkey and said to the servant, "Hurry! Don't slow down unless I tell you to."

<sup>25</sup> As she approached the man of God at Mount Carmel, Elisha saw her in the distance. He said to Gehazi, "Look, the woman from Shunem is coming.

<sup>26</sup> Run out to meet her and ask her, 'Is everything all right with you, your husband, and your child?'" "Yes," the woman told Gehazi, "everything is fine."

<sup>27</sup> But when she came to the man of God at the mountain, she fell to the ground before him and caught hold of his feet. Gehazi began to push her away, but the man of God said, "Leave her alone. She is deeply troubled, but the LORD has not told me what it is."

<sup>28</sup> Then she said, "Did I ask you for a son, my lord? And didn't I say, 'Don't deceive me and get my hopes up?'"

<sup>29</sup> Then Elisha said to Gehazi, "Get ready to travel; take my staff and go! Don't talk to anyone along the way. Go quickly and lay the staff on the child's face."

<sup>30</sup> But the boy's mother said, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I won't go home unless you go with me." So Elisha returned with her.

<sup>31</sup> Gehazi hurried on ahead and laid the staff on the child's face, but nothing happened. There was no sign of life. He returned to meet Elisha and told him, "The child is still dead."

So one morning while **the child**, evidently still quite young, he's out in the fields with **his father**. **It's a hot day, and they're out there harvesting the crops when he gets a violent headache**. They carry him back to his mother, and they're thinking that it's the heat from the sun and just give him some rest and fluids, and he'll get better, but he doesn't get any better—in fact, he gets worse and dies shortly thereafter. They didn't have ERs or all the drugs that we have today, but even with all of our medical achievements, people die everyday where doctors are clueless and have no idea what was the cause.

Now clearly the young boy was dead and his mother knew it. Her thoughts turned immediately to Elisha and she prepared to seek his help. Perhaps she did not tell **her husband** that her son had died because she feared he would not let her go if he knew the boy was dead. When she told him she wanted to see Elisha (**the man of God**); he questioned the need since it was **not the New Moon or the Sabbath**, occasions for religious festivals. In other words, his response to her was, "Why now? It's not Christmas or Easter." Why do you need to talk to the Man of God now during the harvest? Her husband's spiritual concerns seem to have been superficial. But she answers him by saying, "**It's all right**" which was designed to avoid any further conversation. Again, her husband may not even have known that his son

was dead at this point in the story and if she went into more detail, he may not have let her go because he'd be concerned with preparing the boy's body for burial which took place the same day.

Quickly the woman rode her **donkey**, while **her servant** led. Elisha was only a few miles away **at Mount Carmel**. **The interesting point here is that** she knew where to find him. **When** the prophet **saw her** coming he sent **Gehazi** to run out to meet her. But she would not be delayed with explanations to Gehazi. She hurried on to Elisha. Her confidence was in Elisha's ability as a **man of God**, not in **his servant**.

When she gets to Elisha, **she** grasped **his feet**, a gesture indicating extreme humility, need, and desperation. **Gehazi** felt that her behavior was improper, but Elisha recognized it as the expression of deepest grief. As is common under extreme stress the woman's first words to Elisha did not tell him why she had come but how she felt about what had happened. She referred to the fact that having **a son** who died was a loss of her **hopes**, as though she had never had a son at all. She was so heartbroken at her son's death that at the moment and told Elisha she felt it would have been better if her son had never been born.

In effect, she was saying to Elisha, "Why did you mess with me like that?! Why give me a son only to have him taken away? Why build up my hopes only to have them crushed like this? I would be better off if he had never been born!"

### The Prophet's Miracle

Let's read what happens next in **2 Kings 4:29-37 (NLT)**

<sup>29</sup> Then Elisha said to Gehazi, "Get ready to travel; take my staff and go! Don't talk to anyone along the way. Go quickly and lay the staff on the child's face."

<sup>30</sup> But the boy's mother said, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I won't go home unless you go with me." So Elisha returned with her.

<sup>31</sup> Gehazi hurried on ahead and laid the staff on the child's face, but nothing happened. There was no sign of life. He returned to meet Elisha and told him, "The child is still dead."

<sup>32</sup> When Elisha arrived, the child was indeed dead, lying there on the prophet's bed.

<sup>33</sup> He went in alone and shut the door behind him and prayed to the LORD.

<sup>34</sup> Then he lay down on the child's body, placing his mouth on the child's mouth, his eyes on the child's eyes, and his hands on the child's hands. And as he stretched out on him, the child's body began to grow warm again!

<sup>35</sup> Elisha got up, walked back and forth across the room once, and then stretched himself out again on the child. This time the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes!

<sup>36</sup> Then Elisha summoned Gehazi. "Call the child's mother!" he said. And when she came in, Elisha said, "Here, take your son!"

<sup>37</sup> She fell at his feet and bowed before him, overwhelmed with gratitude. Then she took her son in her arms and carried him downstairs.

The boy was indeed dead. Elisha shut the door of the room so that he could concentrate in prayer to the Lord, while his servant, Gehazi, stayed outside the room with the mother. Elisha is lying down in a prone position on top of the boy. The boy's body grew warm from contact with Elisha as God began to answer Elisha's prayer.

Elisha then paced back and forth in the room, apparently continuing to pour out his soul in fervent, persistent prayer. He then went and lay prostrate atop the young boy once again. God restored the boy to life, air returned to his lungs, he sneezed seven times, and he opened his eyes.

When the Shunammite woman entered the room and saw her son alive, she fell at Elisha's feet out of respect and gratitude and bowed to the ground before the Lord in worship. Then, she took her son in her arms and left the room, full of joy and gratitude for what the Lord had done for her.

## G. The Healing of Naaman, the Leper

**Theme: God communicates with man**

**Theme: That which is impossible with man, is possible with God**

**Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram.** Naaman was a successful and courageous warrior, **highly regarded because** of the victories God **had given** the Arameans under his leadership. However, **he had leprosy, a dreaded disease that** causes severe, disfiguring [skin](#) sores and [nerve damage](#) in the arms and legs. The disease has been around since ancient times, often surrounded by terrifying, negative stigmas and tales of [leprosy](#) patients being shunned as outcasts. Apparently, the disease of leprosy had not reached a stage where Naaman could not function in his role as commander of the King's forces.

During the course of their occasional battles with **Israel**, Naaman's forces had captured some Israelites whom they made slaves. One of these was **a young girl** whom Naaman had given to his **wife** as a servant. Evidently Naaman and his wife were kind to this girl because she sought **Naaman's** welfare. This is another example of God's divine providence. God arranged for Naaman to chose this one Israelite girl as a house slave. What was God up to? What role would this servant girl play in Naaman's life?

Let's read on in **2 Kings 5:2-10 to see what happens next.**

<sup>2</sup> At this time Aramean raiders had invaded the land of Israel, and among their captives was a young girl who had been given to Naaman's wife as a maid.

<sup>3</sup> One day the girl said to her mistress, "I wish my master would go to see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy."

<sup>4</sup> So Naaman told the king what the young girl from Israel had said.

<sup>5</sup> "Go and visit the prophet," the king of Aram told him. "I will send a letter of introduction for you to take to the king of Israel." So Naaman started out, carrying as gifts 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and ten sets of clothing.

<sup>6</sup> The letter to the king of Israel said: "With this letter I present my servant Naaman. I want you to heal him of his leprosy."

<sup>7</sup> When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes in dismay and said, "This man sends me a leper to heal! Am I God, that I can give life and take it away? I can see that he's just trying to pick a fight with me."

<sup>8</sup> But when Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes in dismay, he sent this message to him: "Why are you so upset? **Send Naaman to me, and he will learn that there is a true prophet here in Israel.**"

<sup>9</sup> So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and waited at the door of Elisha's house.

<sup>10</sup> But Elisha sent a messenger out to him with this message: "Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored, and you will be healed of your leprosy."

The young Israelite slave girl told her mistress who then told her husband, Naaman, that a prophet lived in Samaria who could cure the leprosy. This, of course, was Elisha, who lived in the capital city.

The Aramean **king** was anxious for his valuable commander to be cleansed, not only because he was a trusted friend but because the dreaded disease would eventually rob the king of his top military commander. **Naaman** set out to visit **King Joram** who he assumed would order the prophet to cure him. **With him** the commander took gifts of **10 talents** (ca. 750 pounds) **of silver, 600 shekels** (ca. 150 pounds) **of gold, and 10 sets of clothing**, all prized gifts in the Near East. He also carried a **letter** from his king to Joram requesting in matter-of-fact terms that **Naaman** be cured.

King Joram was dismayed when he **read the letter** from Ben-Hadad II. Tearing one's **robes** indicated great anxiety and distress. Israel and Aram had been at peace, but it appeared to Joram that Ben-Hadad was trying to **pick a fight** again as he had done with Joram's father.

Joram did not realize that Naaman did not expect *him* to cure the leprosy. Elisha did not even enter Joram's mind. **The Israelite king had no use for that prophet who constantly opposed him. Joram wanted as little contact with him as possible.**

**When Elisha** learned of Joram's anxiety over Ben-Hadad's letter he sent the king a **message** not to worry. If Joram would send Naaman to him the prophet would heal him. Naaman would learn, even if King Joram had not, **that there** was a true **prophet in Israel**. Before long **Naaman** and his whole entourage arrived at **Elisha's** door.

Elisha was not impressed in the least by this great general and his entourage. In fact, he didn't even go out to meet him; instead he **sent a messenger to** convey his simple "prescription." Naaman was told to dip **seven times in the Jordan** River and he would be healed of his disease. The cure lay not in the water of the Jordan but in obedient faith in God's promise through His prophet.

Now that sounds simple enough. Just go and dip seven times in the Jordan River and Naaman will be healed of his leprosy. But let's read how he responds to this prescription from Elisha.

### **2 Kings 5:11-19 (NLT)**

<sup>11</sup> But Naaman became angry and stalked away. "I thought he would certainly come out to meet me!" he said. "I expected him to wave his hand over the leprosy and call on the name of the LORD his God and heal me!"

<sup>12</sup> Aren't the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than any of the rivers of Israel? Why shouldn't I wash in them and be healed?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage.

<sup>13</sup> But his officers tried to reason with him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something very difficult, wouldn't you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he says simply, 'Go and wash and be cured!'"

<sup>14</sup> So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times, as the man of God had instructed him. And his skin became as healthy as the skin of a young child's, and he was healed!

<sup>15</sup> Then Naaman and his entire party went back to find the man of God. They stood before him, and

Naaman said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant."

<sup>16</sup> But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept any gifts." And though Naaman urged him to take the gift, Elisha refused.

<sup>17</sup> Then Naaman said, "All right, but please allow me to load two of my mules with earth from this place, and I will take it back home with me. From now on I will never again offer burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the LORD.

<sup>18</sup> However, may the LORD pardon me in this one thing: When my master the king goes into the temple of the god Rimmon to worship there and leans on my arm, may the LORD pardon me when I bow, too."

<sup>19</sup> "Go in peace," Elisha said. So Naaman started home again.

**When Naaman** is told by Elisha to dip his body in the Jordan River seven times, he gets angry and refuses for two reasons:

(1) His pride had been offended by Elisha's offhanded treatment of him; he had expected a cleansing ceremony in keeping with his own dignity. He expected Elisha to just wave his hand over him and heal him. He's angry that Elisha didn't even come out to meet him.

(2) He resented having been told to wash in a muddy river that he considered inferior to the **rivers** in his hometown; the water of the Jordan, he thought, could not possibly do him any good.

All too often we want God to do something and we think He's going to do it a certain way, usually our way—the way we think it ought to be done. But God's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts greater than our thoughts—He does things in a way that will bring the greatest good as well as the best results. For example, He had Elisha tell Naaman to go and dip in the Jordan River 7 times because he needed to learn to obey what the prophet of God was telling him to do, and he needed to be humbled. Naaman was a proud leper—most definitely. He needed to be knocked down a few pegs, and gain some humility.

The commander's **servants were able to** view the situation objectively. Approaching him tenderly they appealed to him as a **father** to be reasonable. They pointed out that it was not as though Elisha had requested something difficult or some great thing. **What harm would there be in giving Elisha's remedy a try?**

So, even though he must have felt somewhat ashamed, Naaman humbled himself and obeyed the word of the Lord. As he obeyed in faith he was **cleansed. God did even more for him and restored his flesh to its soft boyhood texture.** God had prescribed that he wash **seven times** to indicate that the healing was completely a work of God, "for seven is the stamp of the works of God."

In all the service and miracles performed by Elisha the prophet, whether it was in response to sickness, death, financial need, hunger or to give wise counsel to kings, something to note is that God didn't prevent problems and trials in the lives of His people. Instead, God used these occasions to increase their faith and trust in Him. God often allows problems and trials for our learning, for our experience and for our spiritual growth.

When we remember these stories, we can draw strength from them and understand that God is willing and able to help us with what we need, when we need it. However, God expects us to keep His Word, to

obey all that He has commanded us. As we walk in the light, and seek to obey Jesus, we can come boldly before Him in times of need.

Elisha's message is just as important for us today, as we draw near to God and allow Him to use us to lay hands on the sick, pray for their healing and restoration, and believing God for a miracle in our own lives. As a famous female evangelist used to say everyday on her radio broadcast: "As long as God is still on His throne and hears and answers prayer, you can believe Him today for a miracle."

Our next **Lesson is 36: Strangers in a Strange Land**, where Judah is carried off into Babylonian captivity. How do the Israelites fare in a foreign land. Join me for Lesson 36 which is all about Daniel, God's young prophet and his three friends, and how God protects them from some pretty scary circumstances.