

2 Kings Chapter 4

Verses 1-7

The amount of “oil” the widow received was limited only to the number of “vessels” she collected.

God met her needs both for the present and the future.

2 Kings 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."

“The sons of the prophets”:

Did marry at times.

Levitical legislation allowed for debtors to work off their debts (Exodus 21:2-4; Lev. 25:39-40; Deut. 12:12).

The enslaving of family members in lieu of a debt was a common practice in the ancient Near East.

See note on 1 Kings 20:35.

“My two sons to be bondmen”:

According to the Mosaic law, creditors could enslave debtors and their children to work off a debt when they could not pay (Exodus 21:2-4; Deut. 15:12-18).

The period of servitude could last until the next year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:39-40).

Rich people and creditors, however, were not to take advantage of the destitute (see Deuteronomy 15:1-18).

This one verse tells us a lot.

Prophets were permitted to have wives.

We must notice that she went to the prophet for help.

Indirectly she is going to God.

She knew there would be no mercy shown her by the worldly creditor.

If the creditor cannot get the money, he will take her sons into servitude to pay the indebtedness.

This is a type and shadow of all of us, who owe our lives for the debt of sin we committed.

The penalty for sin is death.

Jesus (our High Priest), paid our debt in full for us.

Let us follow the story, and see what this man of God does to help this widow.

2 Kings 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."

"A pot of oil":

A flask of oil used to anoint the body.

Elisha realizes that he must help her out of this problem.

The verse above is as if he is thinking with the words he says.

Notice, she submits to his decision, when she calls herself his handmaid.

Her husband was a prophet, so the oil is, probably, a small portion of anointing oil.

2 Kings 4:3 "Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, [even] empty vessels; borrow not a few."

For he perceived that she had none.

"Even empty vessels":

Which they might more readily lend her.

"Borrow not a few":

But as many as she could get; the prophet, under a divine impulse, was directed to say this to her, foreseeing, by a spirit of prophecy, that a large quantity of oil would be given her.

These vessels are like buckets, or pots.

She is to gather all of the spare containers that her neighbors have.

2 Kings 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."

“Shut the door upon thee”:

Since the widow’s need was private, the provision was to be private also.

Further, the absence of Elisha demonstrated that the miracle happened only by God’s power.

God’s power multiplied “little” into “much,” filling all the vessels to meet the widow’s need (see 1 Kings 17:7-16).

The miraculous provision was a spiritual experience and not designed for public show (see Matthew 6:6).

God will multiply what she has, and every time she pours one vessel full, she is to get another vessel and fill it, until all the vessels she has are full.

Notice, God uses what she already had to bless her.

It is like the five loaves and two fishes, which Jesus fed the multitude with.

2 Kings 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."

And did as he advised her, borrowed many empty vessels of her neighbors, having faith in what the prophet had said to her.

"And shut the door upon her and upon her sons":

And then went to work as she was directed, with her sons.

"Who brought the vessels to her":

the empty ones she had borrowed.

"And she poured out":

The oil out of her pot into them.

2 Kings 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."

For the oil being miraculously increased as it was poured forth, there was enough to fill all the vessels.

Ben Gersom and Abarbanel say, that when the pot was emptied, all the air that entered it was turned into oil.

That she said to her son, bring me yet a vessel":

As she had two sons, one it is probable was setting aside the full vessels, as she poured into them.

And the other in bringing to her the empty vessels, and to whom she thus speaks.

"And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more":

Not an empty one, they were all filled.

"And the oil stayed":

It ran no longer, it was no more multiplied; there was no necessity of continuing the miracle.

This oil may be an emblem of the grace that flows from the fullness of it in Christ, to which it is compared, which will be always flowing, as long as there is a vessel of salvation, or faith in any to receive it (see Matt. 25:3; 1 John 2:20).

She and her sons did just as Elisha had told her to do.

They poured until all of the vessels were completely full.

Then the oil stopped reproducing itself.

2 Kings 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."

Elisha the prophet, what had been done, what a quantity of oil she had, and advised with him what was to be done with it.

"And he said, Go, sell thy oil, and pay thy debt":

What was thus miraculously produced was no doubt very good and excellent, and would fetch a good price.

And she is therefore bid to turn it into money, and pay her debts with it.

She was not to keep it all for her own use, and indulge to luxury with it, but first pay her just debt, as everyone ought to do that is able.

"And live thou and thy children of the rest":

So that it seems there was enough to pay her debt with it, rid her of her troubles, and somewhat remaining for the support of herself and children.

This oil was so much that it easily paid her debt, and was a living for her and her two sons.

There could have been more children, but we know there were two sons.

She waited, until Elisha told her to sell it, before she did this.

God is good.

He will see to the needs of those in service for Him.

In this case, He took care of even more than their needs.

Verses 8-14

Elisha wanted to thank the Shunammite woman for “all this care” and hospitality she had shown him and his servant.

The absence of children in the Old Testament was interpreted as a curse or, at best, a sign of shame.

And with “no son,” she would likely end up impoverished once her “husband” died.

2 Kings 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."

“Shunem”:

A town in the territory of Issachar near Jezreel (Joshua 19:18), on the slopes of Mt., Moreh, overlooking the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley (see note on 1 Kings 1:3).

The woman was a “great woman,” a lady who was financially well-off and of significant social standing.

This is the beginning of a totally different happening.

Shunem was in Galilee.

The fact that the "woman was great" could mean great in stature, or it could mean well thought of.

It, probably, means that she was a woman of financial means.

This would be more likely, since it would be in direct contrast to the widow earlier in the lesson.

She discovered Elisha passing her house, and she invited him in to eat.

It seemed, that every time Elisha came this way, he made it a point to stop and eat here.

Many people travelling in those days depended on the hospitality of the people to feed them.

There were no restaurants.

Verses 9-10

For the upper room where the prophet's chamber was located (see the note on 1 Kings 17:19).

2 Kings 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."

"Man of God":

See note on 1:9.

The woman recognized Elisha as a prophet uniquely separated unto God.

Elisha's holiness prompted the woman to ask her husband that a separate, small, walled upper room be provided for the prophet (verse 10).

The woman must have feared the "holy" Elisha coming into contact with their "profane" room (Lev. 10:10).

He must not have told them that he was a prophet, but she had decided that he was by his clothes and his actions.

Probably, he prayed before eating, or perhaps, he spoke of the LORD.

2 Kings 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."

Either of the city, to which their house might join, or of their garden, a little distance from the house.

Though the Jewish writers commonly understand it of a little edifice built up of walls of stone or bricks, and not one with reeds, or stud and mud.

"Let us set for him there a bed":

That he may stay all night when he pleases.

"And a table":

Not only to eat his food, but to write on, and lay his books on he reads.

Of the table of a scholar of the wise men, in later times, we are told, that two thirds of it were covered with a cloth, and the other third was uncovered, on which stood the plates and the herbs.

"And a stool":

To sit upon at the table.

"And a candlestick":

With a candle in it, to light him in the night to read by, and the like.

"And it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither":

Where he would be free from the noise of the house, and be more retired for prayer, reading, meditation, and study.

And where he would not be disturbed by the servants of the family, and be mixed with them.

All this she contrived, both for his honor, and for his quietness and peace.

She felt that she would like to help Elisha more, than just feeding him when he came by.

They would fix him a place to rest his weary bones.

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

As he had been in practice to do.

"And he turned into the chamber":

Built for him, and to which he was directed.

"And lay there":

All night, and which no doubt was frequently repeated by him, he accepting of the kindness of his host.

We see, that she had been correct in assuming he needed a place of rest, when he came by.

He did stop and rest for a while.

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

“Gehazi”:

Elisha’s personal servant who was prominent here (and in 5:20-27).

Probably Gehazi is the unnamed servant (in verse 43).

The term “servant” used there was used (in 1 Kings 19:21), of Elisha’s relationship to Elijah.

Throughout this narrative, Elisha contacted the Shunammite woman through Gehazi (verses 11-13, 15, 25, 29).

Gehazi was involved in this ministry so that he might have opportunity to mature in his service to the LORD.

The word for “servant” here designates one who is a professional trainee.

It is used of young soldiers (in 1 Kings 20:14-15), and of Elisha’s own relation to Elijah (in 1 Kings 19:21).

“Gehazi” held a privileged and responsible position with Elisha.

2 Kings 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."

“I dwell among mine own people”:

This reply expressed her contentment, since she wanted nothing.

Elisha wanted to repay her for her kindness.

He thought, perhaps, she wanted him to speak for her to the king, or the captain of the host.

She was satisfied with her station in life, and told him she would rather live among her own people.

Notice, she asked for nothing herself.

2 Kings 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."

“No child, and her husband is old”:

This remark implied two things:

- (1) She suffered the shame of being a barren woman (Gen. 16:1; 18:10-15; 25:21; 30:1-2; 1 Sam. 1:6); and
- (2) Her husband might die without an heir to carry on his name (Deut. 25:5-10).

Since she would not tell Elisha anything she wanted for her kindness, Elisha had Gehazi to check and see, if there would be anything she wanted, or needed.

In the Hebrew families, the women thought it was a curse from God not to have children.

She had not mentioned this, but Gehazi found out for Elisha.

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

Perhaps finding an impulse on his own mind, from the Spirit of God, that this was the thing to be done for her.

"And when he had called her, she stood in the door":

Of his chamber (See 2 Kings 4:12).

2 Kings 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."

“Nay, my lord”:

In response to Elisha’s announcement that she would have a son, the woman asked Elisha not to build up her hopes if she would be disappointed later.

Her reply indicated that she felt having a son was impossible.

“Man of God”:

See note on 1:9.

There are several instances in the Bible, where people beyond childbearing age have children.

They are a gift from God.

It is more than she can believe.

Her heart's desire would be fulfilled.

He tells her, the baby will be born before this time the next year.

2 Kings 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."

“Conceived ... bare”:

This was like Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 21:1-2).

His prophecy came true.

She had her son.

Verses 18-23

Based on her actions, the woman may have been trying to keep the boy's death a secret from her husband until Elisha came.

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

Perhaps was six or seven years of age, or more.

"It fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers":

It was harvest time, and the men were reaping the corn in the fields.

And his father, though a wealthy man, was with them to direct them, and see they did their business well, as Boaz formerly.

And the child went out from the house to the field, to see his father and the reapers, for his recreation and diversion.

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

The lad may have suffered a fatal sunstroke.

“My head, my head”:

The child probably suffered sunstroke.

The cries of the boy, the part affected, and the season of the year (“reapers”), lead to that conclusion.

Sunstroke could be fatal, as in this case (verse 20).

Children, who live on a farm, love to go out and watch the fields being reaped.

He was, probably, still a small child, but old enough to go to the field with his father.

He suddenly grabs his head and begins to complain of pain.

This could have been a sunstroke, or many other things.

I personally have experienced extreme heat and fainted from it.

Your head pounds severely with this.

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

The lad led him home, and delivered him to his mother.

"He sat on her knees till noon, and then died":

Out of her great affection, she took him on her knees, and laid his head in her bosom to sooth the pain, and in this posture he continued until the middle of the day, and then expired.

By which it appears it was in the morning when he went into the field, and when the sun was pretty high, and beat strongly on him.

Which, it may be, produced a fever, and which issued in his death.

Whatever happened to him in the field was very serious.

He is not in a coma, he is dead.

2 Kings 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."

Into the little chamber built for the prophet.

"And laid him on the bed of the man of God":

Not from any imagination of any virtue in it to bring her child to life.

Though she might think of the prophet, and have faith that he could raise it to life, as Elijah raised the widow of Zarephath's son laid on his bed, of which she might have heard.

But this being a private room, and into which none went, she laid it here to conceal its death from her husband and family, and to prevent grief, and that they might not bury it until she returned.

"And shut the door upon him":

That no creature might enter, and, do any damage to his corpse.

"And went out":

Not out of the chamber, that she did before she shut the door, but out of the house.

She knew her only help was the LORD.

She left the child on the bed of Elisha.

She put him in Elisha's room, so no one would disturb him, until she could get back with Elisha.

2 Kings 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."

In the field, who might be within call, or by a messenger she sent to him.

"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":

Intimating that she should not be long gone, but should return again presently.

Saying not a word of the death of the child, or of the occasion of her going.

Notice, she did not tell her husband, that their son was dead.

He does know that she wants to go for the prophet Elisha, because the child is sick.

She calls for an animal to ride, and an escort to go with her.

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

"Neither new moon, nor sabbath":

The first day of the month and the seventh day of the week were both marked with special religious observance and rest from work (Num. 28:9-15).

The husband implied that only on such dates would a person visit a prophet.

She apparently concealed the death of the child from him ("it shall be well"), to spare him unnecessary grief, in light of the power of the man of God whom she believed might do a miracle for the boy.

Verses 24-28

Her few words to Elisha's servant "Gehazi" suggest that the woman wanted only the prophet to know her "distress."

Elisha's statement that "the LORD has hidden it from me, and had not told me" is a reminder that prophets possessed no special power or insight on their own but were dependent on the LORD's revelation.

2 Kings 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."

Her servant did it by her order.

"And said to her servant, Drive, and go forward":

Make all the haste he could.

"Slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee":

Do not be afraid of riding too fast for me; if thou does, I will tell thee; till then, keep on a good pace.

Abarbanel says she walked afoot all the way, and ordered the man not to slacken his pace in riding for her, unless she called to him.

The Targum seems to favor this sense, "do not press me to ride unless I call to thee;" so that the ass was for Elisha to ride on.

But one would think, that, as she was in haste, quicker dispatch would be made by her riding than by walking (see 2 Kings 4:22).

The husband tries to tell her, that she will not be able to find Elisha.

She knows in her heart, that she will be able to find him.

She is saying to this servant to go as fast as he can, and not to worry about her comfort.

2 Kings 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:"

“Mount Carmel” had become a familiar retreat for Elisha (2:25).

Perhaps a prophetic school had grown up at the scene of Elijah’s great triumph (See 1 Kings 18:16-45).

The distance from Shunem was about 15 to 25 miles from Mount Carmel.

His home must have been at mount Carmel.

It seems, she went directly to mount Carmel.

Elisha saw her coming.

Verses 26-30

At first, the Shunammite woman’s response to Elisha seemed to resemble the bitter response of the widow of Zarephath to Elijah (1 Kings 17:18).

But here determination to speak to Elisha suggested her confidence in his willingness and ability to act.

The woman believed the LORD could work through the prophet to bring about her child’s recovery, just as He had done when she conceived.

Her faith stands out in a time of national disbelief and disobedience.

2 Kings 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."

“Is it well”:

She withheld the real sorrow of her son’s death, waiting to tell the prophet Elisha directly.

Elisha is concerned and sends his servant running to meet her to ask of her well-being.

She does not tell Gehazi her problem, the same as she did not tell her husband.

Her problems are just for Elisha's ears.

2 Kings 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."

"By the feet":

The grasping of the feet was a sign of humiliation and veneration.

Gehazi thought that she should not have touched the prophet, and he was about to pull her away from the prophet, when Elisha told him to leave her alone.

She had been a blessing to Elisha.

He certainly wanted to hear of her problems.

Generally, the LORD revealed to him ahead of time about problems, but in this instance he did not.

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

It was not at her request she had one, at least the first motion was not from her; the prophet first told her, and assured her she should have one.

Without her asking for it; she might be pleased with it, and desire the promise might be fulfilled.

But it was not an inordinate, importunate, desire of one, in which she had exceeded, that so the taking it away from her might be a correction of her for it.

"Did I not say, Do not deceive me":

By giving hopes of a child, and yet have none; and now it was equally the same, or worse, to have one, and then to have it taken away again as soon as had almost.

So the Targum, "did I not say unto thee, if a child is given me, let it live, if not, do not trouble or grieve me"?

And then, no doubt, she told him plainly the child was dead, and where she had laid it, though not recorded (see verse 16).

2 Kings 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."

"Lay my staff upon the face of the child":

Elisha sent Gehazi ahead because he was younger and, therefore, faster.

He may have expected the LORD to restore the child's life when his staff was placed upon him, viewing that staff as representative of his own presence and a symbol of divine power (2:8).

The laying of Elisha's "staff" on the dead child's "face" would symbolize the prophet's claim upon the "child" until he could come.

The prophet's staff was the symbol of his God-given power (Exodus 4:1-4; 17:8-13).

The "staff" was the symbol of God's power and Elisha's authority (Psalm 23:4).

Laying it "on the face of the child" signified Elisha's intention to personally come to the woman's home and expressed faith that God would restore the child's life.

Elisha sent Gehazi ahead, because he could travel faster.

He sent his own staff.

2 Kings 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."

She wished the prophet himself to go to her child.

The writer appropriately substitutes "the mother of the child" for "the Shunammite" or "the woman" in connection with this impassioned utterance, which induced the prophet to yield to her wishes.

This mother was determined to get help for her son.

She would not leave, until Elisha came with her.

She was not satisfied with Elisha's staff being carried to her son by Gehazi.

Elisha would have to come to her son, himself.

2 Kings 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."

The prophet and the Shunammite.

"And laid the staff upon the face of the child":

As he was ordered.

"But there was neither voice, nor hearing":

It seems as if he spoke when he laid the staff on the child, but it heard and answered him not, so that there was no sign of life in it.

"Wherefore he went again to meet him":

Upon the road between Carmel and Shunem.

"And told him, saying, The child is not awaked":

By which he expresses its being dead.

Or, if he knew nothing of its death, he supposed it fast asleep, which was the reason of its not hearing and answering, though the former seems best.

The woman was right.

It must be Elisha.

Elisha was not in error in sending the staff.

We read of aprons and handkerchiefs being sent from the body of Paul, and healing people.

Perhaps Gehazi did not believe the boy would be restored by this.

We know the mother did not believe this would restore him.

For this type of miracle, there had to be a vast amount of faith.

Verses 32-37

God's prophets were not only preachers of sin and repentance but also agents of His healing mercy and compassion (1 Kings 17:23).

Verses 32-35

Elisha's faith and practice are evident.

Not only did he believe God but he acted in accordance with known prophetic procedures in such cases (1 Kings 17:21; Acts 20:9-10).

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

Of the house of the Shunammite, and into the chamber built for him.

"Behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed":

Upon his bed, and where he found him and was really dead.

Just as the woman had told Elisha, the boy is dead.

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

Himself and the dead child; that nobody might come in and interrupt him in his prayers for the restoration of it to life, nor see the motions and gestures he used, and the postures he put himself in.

"And prayed unto the LORD":

That he would restore the child to life.

This means no one was in the room except Elisha and the boy.

This prayer was an urgent request of the LORD.

2 Kings 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."

"Stretched himself upon the child":

Like Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:17-24), Elisha demonstrated the LORD's power over death by raising their son from the dead.

Also like Elijah, part of the restoration process involved lying on top of the boy's body.

This personal contact of his flesh upon the flesh of the child brought warmth to the child's body, which was cold in death.

When he put his mouth on the boy's mouth, it could have been that he breathed into the boy's mouth to get oxygen to him.

2 Kings 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."

Left the chamber, and came down to the house where the family chiefly resided, and walked to and fro in deep thought and meditation, and, no doubt, in fervent utterances for the wished-for blessing to be completed.

"And went up":

To the chamber again, and up to the bed in it.

"And stretched himself upon him":

As before:

And the child sneezed seven times":

Which was a sign of life, and even of health; and hereby his head was cleared, as some observe, of those conditions that had caused the pains in it, and had issued in death.

"And the child opened his eyes":

Looked upon the prophet, another sign of life.

Again, he warmed the body of the child with his body.

Also, virtue could have gone from him to the child.

Of course, that virtue came from the LORD through Elisha to the boy.

This sneezing seven times shows that his lungs were full of air again.

He is breathing.

"Seven" means spiritually complete.

2 Kings 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."

To come up to the chamber to him.

"So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son":

From off the bed, alive, safe, and sound.

He did not allow the mother in the room, when he was praying for the boy.

Gehazi was told to call the mother.

The boy had to be a small child for the mother to be able to pick him up in her arms.

He is alive, his mother's faith in the LORD through Elisha, had caused him to live.

2 Kings 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."

In reverence of him, and with the most profound gratitude and thankfulness for the mercy received:

"And took up her son, and went out":

Of the chamber into her house, with great joy and gladness.

This was her way of thanking Elisha for the life of her child.

Verses 38-41

This is the third of four short stories in this chapter in which God used Elisha to perform a miracle.

"Death in the pot" means the stew included poisonous plant ingredients.

2 Kings 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."

Where he was with Elijah a little before his assumption to heaven (2 Kings 2:1).

And whither he went, there being a school of the prophets, as he did to all places where there were any, and where he had been before with Elijah.

Partly to instruct, encourage, and strengthen them, and partly to confirm his office as a prophet by miracles, which he did in several places he came to.

"And there was a dearth in the land":

A famine through drought.

"And the sons of the prophets were sitting before him":

As disciples before their master (see Acts 22:3).

"And he said unto his servant": very probably Gehazi.

"Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets":

Who seemed to have lived together in one house or college, and to be to the number of one hundred (see 2 Kings 4:43), and therefore required to have a large pot set on to boil pottage for them all.

"Gilgal":

See note on 2:1.

This was about 40 miles south of Shunem.

"Sons of the prophets":

See note on 1 Kings 20:35.

Elisha had to be visiting the school of the prophets at Gilgal when this verse begins.

He, probably was thought of as the head of the prophets in the land.

He had taken the place of Elijah.

It would be natural for him to check in and see how things are going with the would-be prophets.

This great pot was to make some sort of meal for the prophets.

2 Kings 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."

"Wild gourds":

Probably a kind of wild cucumber that can be fatally poisonous if eaten in large quantities.

2 Kings 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]."

When the pottage was boiled, they poured it out into dishes or basins, for the sons of the prophets 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":

Poison, the cause of death; the pottage was so exceeding bitter, that they concluded there must be some poisonous herb in it.

"And they could not eat thereof":

They stopped eating, it being so very disagreeable, and, as they supposed, dangerous.

This type gourd was not edible.

Food was so scarce, that the young prophet who went to the field to find something to eat, had just got the first living thing he saw.

Boiled gourd would taste terrible, and under some circumstances could be poisonous.

The wild variety would probably be poisonous.

2 Kings 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."

"Meal":

The meal itself did not make the noxious stew edible, but a miraculous cure was accomplished through the meal.

Like Elijah (1 Kings 17:14-16), Elisha used meal to demonstrate the concern of God for man.

Elisha poured meal into the boiling pot of gourds, as he had put salt in the water at Jericho to purify it.

God told Elisha to put the meal in the water.

The act of obedience to God purified the food in the pot.

Verses 42-44

The middle stories in chapter 4 demonstrate God's power over death.

The first and final stories focus on His providing food, this time for a hundred men from 20 barley loaves and a little grain.

This miracle foreshadows an even greater miracle: Jesus' feeding of the multitudes (Matt. 14:13-21; 15:29-39; Mark 6:30-44; 8:1-10; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15).

2 Kings 4:42 "And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, 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."

“Baal-shalisha”:

The exact location is uncertain.

“Bread of the firstfruits”:

Normally such “first fruits” were reserved for “God” (Lev. 23:20), and the priests (Num. 18:13; Deut. 18:4-6). Though the religion in the northern kingdom was apostate, the man who brought the loaves to Elisha was a representative of godly religion in Israel.

This is a miracle feeding of lesser proportions, than the thousands Jesus fed with the five loaves and two fishes, but a miracle none the less.

There were over 100 men to be fed here, with twenty loaves.

The man from Baal-shalisha is insignificant, as was the boy with the fishes.

Verses 43-44

This scene anticipates the ministry of the great Bread of Life (John 6:35), who multiplied the loaves (Matt. 14:16-20; 15:36-37; John 6:11-13).

The multiplication of the loaves in accordance with the Word of the LORD through His prophet anticipated the messianic ministry of Jesus Himself (15:36-37).

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

His servant Gehazi very probably.

“What, should I set this before one hundred men”:

For so many, it seems, the sons of the prophets were in this place; and these loaves being very small, no more, it is thought by some, than one man could eat.

And the ears of corn but few, the servant suggests they would be nothing comparatively to such a company of men:

“He said again, give the people, that they may eat”:

He insisted upon it that his orders should be obeyed:

“For thus saith the LORD, they shall eat, and shall leave thereof”:

It was suggested to him by a spirit of prophecy, there would be enough for them, and to spare.

Elisha knew that God would multiply the food, as he had multiplied the oil for the widow.

There would be plenty to eat, if they would eat in faith.

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

The twenty barley loaves, and the full ears of corn.

"And they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD":

As the disciples did at the miracle of the loaves and fishes; though that must be allowed to be a greater miracle than this (Matt. 14:17).

We see, in this, an entirely different miracle that Elisha brought from God, than the previous miracles he had done.

When we say that Elisha did them, we mean that the LORD did them through Elisha.

Their faith multiplied the food to fill them all.

2 Kings Chapter 4 Questions

1. Who was the woman who cried out to Elisha in verse 1?
2. Why could her husband not help her?
3. What was she crying out about?
4. What is this situation, in verse 1, a type and shadow of?
5. What was the only thing she had in the house?
6. What is she doing, when she calls herself handmaid?
7. What did Elisha tell her to do?
8. What was she to do with the vessels she borrowed?
9. Who helped her do what Elisha had told her to do?
10. What did she do, when all the vessels were full?
11. How much was the oil worth?

12. Where was Shunem?
13. What did the fact that the woman was great mean?
14. What did she tell her husband about Elisha?
15. What did they do for Elisha, besides feed him, when he came by?
16. Who was Elisha's servant?
17. When he offered to speak for her to the king, what was her reply?
18. When Elisha inquired further of her needs, what did he find out?
19. What did Elisha promise her that seemed impossible?
20. When did the promise come true?
21. Where was the son, when he took sick?
22. What was the outcome of his sickness?
23. Where did the woman go for help?
24. Did she tell her husband he was dead?
25. Where did she find Elisha?
26. What did the servant of Elisha run ahead and do?
27. Who was in the sickroom, when Elisha prayed?
28. What did Elisha do, besides pray?
29. What did Elisha do the second time he went into the room?
30. What unusual thing did the child do, to show he was alive?
31. When the woman saw her son was restored to her, what did she do?
32. What was in Gilgal, where Elisha went?
33. What did Elisha tell the young prophet to do?
34. What was wrong with the food?
35. What did Elisha do to it to make it pure?
36. What did the man from Baal-shalisha bring to them to eat?

37. How many had to eat of this?
38. What did the servitor say about this food?
39. There would be plenty to eat, if they ate in _____.
40. What do we mean, when we say that Elisha did miracles?