

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS  
LESSON 2B  
THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS  
CHAPTER 4**

**INTRODUCTION**

The second epoch of miracles continued in the ministry of Elisha. He was known as the prophet of water whereas his master Elijah was known as the prophet of fire. Israel was going through a spiritual dirge which continued into the ministry of Elisha. Miracles abounded during the period because of the great sin of idolatry and how the Name of Jehovah was hyphenated with the worship of Baal.

The clear distinction between the LORD and Baal must be made plain. When leaders such as kings in OT times and pastors and elders in our time compromise, they have basically erased the lines of truth and falsehood. This would lead to great confusion, deception and spiritual decay. When the leaders are incorrigible, the LORD goes out into the highways and byways to bring the people into His fold. The adage is very true that the LORD will always have his remnant no matter how dark the times would be. Israel reigned from 930 to 722 BC without a good king. Yet the LORD

was able to perform miracles in such a dark spiritual landscape of depravity and sin. This gives us hope. This encourages our hearts as the LORD works in the lives of ordinary people. We do not have to be “great” or “rich” or “powerful” or “clever” before God would work in our lives. We just have to have faith and trust Him. What a reassuring truth we have in this chapter.

**OUTLINE**

1. Elisha began his ministry and performed his first miracle helping a poor widow (vv.1-7);
2. Elisha's raised the son of a wealthy and hospitable Shunammite couple (vv.8-37) ;
3. Elisha's healed the pottage for the prophets (vv.38-41);
4. Elisha fed a hundred with twenty loaves of bread (vv.42-44).

**COMMENTARY**

**Elisha Helps a Widow – 4:1**

Elisha's credential as a prophet was now established as equal to Elijah especially after the battle between Israel and Moab. In chapter 4, Elisha performed more miracles of provision and healing. The first was helping a widow whose husband, a former student prophet, had died. Her husband belonged to the prophets' school in which Elisha was a leader. Her husband was a god-fearing man. She had two sons. But he was in debt and the creditors were taking her two sons to serve them as servants.

However, they were not to treat them as slaves. This practice was allowed by the Mosaic Law (Exodus 21:1-11; Leviticus 25:29-31; Deuteronomy 15:1-11). It would be heartbreaking for the widow for she had no means of paying her husband's debt. Moreover, she needed her two sons to support her. The only other thing that she had in the house was a pot of oil. She was in desperate need. The person she turned to for help was Elisha.

### **Living Faith – 4:2-7**

Elisha heard of her plight and helped her. He asked her what she had in the house, and she replied that she had only a jar of oil. Elisha then told her to borrow as many empty jars as she could. He then told her that after she had borrowed all the empty jars that she could get, she was to return to her home. She should shut the door, and then pour her jar of oil into the empty jars. When each jar was full, she should set it aside and do the same with the next jar. She should do that for all the borrowed jars.

The widow went into action immediately. She did not harbour any doubt or any question. She instructed her two sons to borrow as many empty jars as they could. She shut the door of her home and began to do exactly what Elisha told her to do. She poured out the oil from her jar and filled every borrowed jar that she had. When there was no more jars to be filled, the oil that flowed from her jar stopped. She told Elisha that she had done what he had told her. Elisha then told her to sell the oil and to pay the debt with the income. She could pay the debt and

there was a surplus to support her and the two sons.

This is a miracle of provision which the LORD wrought through His servant Elisha. The prophet, Elisha, exemplifies a true leader by helping the widow of one of his students who was in need. The widow showed simple and sincere faith in the LORD through Elisha. She believed that her little jar of oil could fill all the jars which she borrowed. It was not easy on her part to believe. Believing that she could have the abundant oil, she got it!

### **Hospitality Reaps Joy – 4:8-17**

One day, Elisha was on his way to Shunem. The city was about twenty miles northwest of Elisha's hometown, Abel-meholah (1 Kings 19:16). About twenty-five miles beyond Shunem was Mount Carmel. In other words, Shunem was a half-way point between Elisha's hometown and Mount Carmel. Each time when he wanted to visit Mount Carmel to pray or meditate and seek the LORD, he would pass through Shunem or take a break there.

In Shunem, there lived an elderly wealthy couple. The woman, who is unnamed, insisted that Elisha should come to her home for food whenever he stopped by at the town. It was an invitation which Elisha did not refuse. Whenever he passed by, he would call at this great woman's home and enjoy a refreshing meal. One day, she told her husband that she perceived that Elisha was a holy man of God who came to their home quite regularly. She asked her husband to erect a small room on the wall for him

and to furnish it with a bed, a table, a stool and a lamp.

Elisha came one day with his servant Gehazi. And Elisha rested in the room which the woman had prepared for him. Elisha then told Gehazi to call the Shunammite woman. When she came and stood before Gehazi, Elisha instructed his servant to tell her that she had been very caring and kind to them. He asked what could be done for her in return. He wanted to know how she would like to have a word of commendation made to the King on her behalf or at least to the commander-in-chief of the King's army

The woman replied that she was living with her own people. In other words, she was well taken care of by her relatives. Elisha then asked what could be done for her. Gehazi remarked that she had no child and her husband could no more father a child. This gave Elisha an idea. He asked Gehazi to call the woman to him. When she stood at the door of the room, Elisha promised her that about a year later she would be embracing a son. The woman replied (4:16b): "Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid." The woman was not accusing Elisha for lying. In modern term, she was saying to Elisha, "You're kidding me!" The woman did indeed conceive and give birth to a son at the time which Elisha had predicted.

#### **In Times of Sorrow – 4:18-31**

Years passed, and the woman's son grew to be a youth (the Hebrew word "yalad"— could be translated as

"boy child or young man"). One day, he went with his father to the field for harvesting. He suffered a fall and his head was injured. The actual nature of the accident is not told. It was serious enough for he had to be carried home to his mother. The boy sat on his mother's knees and at noontime, he died. She carried the child and laid him in Elisha's bed. She then shut the door and went off. She told her husband to call one of their young servants and to saddle one of the asses because she wanted to see Elisha, the man of God. She did not tell her husband the purpose of her going, nor did she tell her husband that their son was dead and now lying in Elisha's room. Her husband tried to dissuade her from going because it was not one of those special days. Nevertheless she assured him that all would be well. Her mind had no room for any other consideration. She was determined to see Elisha. She saddled an ass and told the young servant to speed up.

She finally arrived at Mount Carmel where she found Elisha. When she was approaching Mount Carmel, Elisha actually saw her approaching in such haste. He exclaimed to Gehazi that she was the Shunammite. He told Gehazi to run to her and enquire if every one was well—herself, her husband and her child. She answered that everyone was well. But when she reached Elisha on top of the hill, she caught Elisha by his feet. Gehazi tried to thrust her away. But Elisha intervened and told Gehazi to let her be for she was feeling bitter in her heart, and the

LORD had not revealed to him what was the matter with her.

When she came face to face with Elisha, it seemed that she was blaming Elisha for her tragedy and sorrow. She had not asked for a son and she had told Elisha not to deceive her. Elisha quickly instructed Gehazi to take his staff and go to the woman's house. He should not stop to greet people or reciprocate when people were to greet him. And when he reached the child, he was to lay Elisha's staff upon the face of the child. But the woman was insistent that she would not leave unless Elisha went along with her. Elisha obliged and followed her. Gehazi walked ahead. Soon they arrived at the home of the woman. Gehazi went ahead and laid Elisha's staff over the face of the child but nothing happened. Gehazi reported the outcome of his attempt to Elisha who was still on his way to the woman's house.

#### **The Lad Is Raised – 4:32-37**

Elisha went straight to his room where the lad was lying. He did not allow the woman and his servant to be with him in the room. He was alone with the child. He prayed to the LORD. Then he placed himself bodily on the lad facing him—mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. This first attempt by stretching himself completely upon the lad caused the body of the child to become warm. Then he walked around in the house, and went up again to the room and once more, he stretched himself upon the child like the first time. The child sneezed seven times and then opened

his eyes. Elisha called Gehazi and instructed him to call the Shunammite. When she came, Elisha presented her son alive to her. The woman was overwhelmed with gratitude and joy; she bowed before Elisha, carried her son and went out.

#### **The Pottage Healed – 4:38-41**

Elisha visited Gilgal where there was a school of prophets. There was famine in the land. Elisha told his servant Gehazi to cook some soup in a great pot. One of the prophets went into the field and picked up some herbs, a wild vine and wild gourds. He then shred them into the pot of soup. When they poured out the soup for the men to eat, they complained to Elisha that "there is death in the pot." It is not clear whether the soup was really death threatening or that it was very bitter to the extent that it was not edible. The latter condition is more plausible. Elisha asked for some "meal" or meal flour. He then cast it into the pot. The soup was now edible and no harm came to them. This was a miracle of healing.

#### **Feeding the One Hundred– 4:42-44**

A man from Baal-shalisha came to Elisha, who was presumably still in Gilgal. He brought some bread, twenty loaves of barley (a lower grade of bread) and corn. Elisha instructed Gehazi to distribute the food to the people. Gehazi once again remarked that the food was not enough to feed one hundred men. Elisha insisted that they be given to the people that they might eat, and Elisha continued to state that it was the will of the LORD that the people should eat and there

would be left over (4:43). So, Gehazi acted according to the word of the LORD. This is another miracle of multiplying what was originally insufficient food so that the people could be fed.

**PRACTICAL VALUE**

The miracles recorded here in this chapter teach us that God can provide. He provided the widow with wealth to clear her debt left by her demised husband who was a prophet. The second miracle was to provide a woman who had longed for a child with one. The third was also related to the same child who needed life for he had died. The fourth was to provide “safe” food for the sons of prophets who were faced with death in the pot. The fifth was the provision of food for the feeding of one hundred similar to the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 by Christ who used the lunch of a small boy. These were miracles done for the ordinary people in the midst of a nation deep in idolatry.

The widow used her only jar of oil and did what she could do: borrowing the empty jars from her neighbours and pouring the jar of oil into the empty jars believing that it would fill all of them. She did it by faith and God honoured her faith. Likewise, the Shunammite woman was given a son for her faith when she honoured the prophet Elisha. She built a room for Elisha and “inconvenienced” herself and her entire household as they hosted Elisha at their home. So in exercising our faith in the Lord our

God, this principle of using what we have should be observed.

We learn that God is able to provide and to heal. He cares for His people. In this chapter, the recipients were believers of God and trusted Him. AMEN

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** 2 Kings 4:1-17; Psalm 37:23-27.

**TUESDAY:** 2 Kings 4:18-36; John 11:23-27.

**WEDNESDAY:** 2 Kings 4:37-44; Mark 4:35-41; 2 Corinthians 1:9.

**THURSDAY:** 2 Kings 4:1-44.

**FRIDAY:** 2 Kings 4:1-44.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What were the needs and resources of the widow? How did she illustrate the working of faith? What truth can we learn?

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2. In what way is the lady of Shunam an example for us (4:8-37)?

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3. What may we learn regarding the character and conduct of a servant of God (4:8-37)?

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4. Was the widow's response to the tragic death of her son who was miraculously given to her acceptable or was it sinful? Explain your answer.

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5. Why does God permit these sudden perils to happen to His servants (4:38-41)?

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6. What special features in Elisha's character does the beautiful incident in 4:42-44 bring out?

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7. What do we learn about God in these two chapters, particularly, concerning the battle and the needs of the armies of Israel?

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8. What from these two chapters impacts you most in your life?

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