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2 Kings 3 - 4



2 Kings - Steve Gregg

In 2 Kings 3-4, Elisha becomes the servant of the new king, Jehoram, after the death of Elijah. The people are facing a water shortage and their lives are at risk. Elisha advises Jehoram to seek the prophets of his father or mother, but the king refuses, stating that Yahweh called three kings together to deliver the hand of Moab. With cooperation from the soldiers, Elisha assures them that God will deliver the mole bites into their hand and instructs them to dig ditches for receptacles for water. The passage emphasizes the importance of seeking help from the prophets and cooperating with one another for God's blessing.

Transcript

So we've got 2 Kings chapter 3 before us and we've seen in the first two chapters the replacement of Elijah with his servant Elisha who had his mantle fall to him and apparently a double portion of Elijah's spirit given to Elisha and now we read again about the king of Israel and a problem that he encountered with Moab. We remember that in the first chapter at the beginning when Ahaziah, the son of Ahab came to power that Moab rebelled against Israel and yet we do not read that anything was done about it then. He had other more pressing concerns, namely his injuries.

He fell, injured himself, was no doubt bedridden and his injuries proved fatal or so it would seem. Actually he died but whether it was from his injuries or from the judgment of God more directly is not stated but he said that he was told by Elijah that having gone up to his bed sick was where he was going to remain until he died. He was not going to ever recover.

And so Ahaziah had died and left the problem of Moab's rebellion unaddressed. His brother Jehoram then becomes king and has to deal with that unresolved problem. And so in chapter 3, Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and reigned twelve years.

And he did evil in the sight of the Lord but not like his father and mother Ahab and Jezebel for he put away the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had made. That's one

good thing he did. Nevertheless he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who had made Israel to sin.

He did not depart from them. So he apparently diminished the visibility of Baal worship in Israel which had been made official and enforced by his mother Jezebel. And his father Ahab had actually built an image, a wooden image of Baal and set it up which Jehoram had the good sense to remove but not the good sense to go all the way back to worshipping Yahweh alone.

And he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam which means the gold calves at Bethel and Dan which still remain the principal worship sites for the people of Israel instead of the temple in Jerusalem. Nevertheless it says he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam. Now verse four, Now Misha the king of Moab was a sheep breeder and he regularly paid the king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs and the wool of one hundred thousand rams.

But it happened when Ahab died that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. So king Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel. So he stopped really providing this wool and that was apparently a primary supply of wool for clothing in Israel from all the sheep that Misha had in his kingdom.

And so they had been taking this tribute in the form of wool and he stopped bringing it. And that led Jehoram to go out and force compliance again. It says then he went and sent Jehoshaphat, he sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah saying the king of Moab has rebelled against me.

Will you go with me and fight against Moab? And he said I will go up. I am as you are. My people as your people.

My horses as your horses. The same response he had given to Ahab when Ahab asked Jehoshaphat if he would go with him to recover Ramoth Gilead from the Assyrians. Now Ahab's son is asking Jehoshaphat to join him in this battle against the Moabites and his answer is precisely in the same words, his agreement to go.

Now on this occasion Jehoshaphat did not say let's inquire of the prophet of Yahweh about this. And I guess it's because it didn't do any good to inquire of the prophet of Yahweh in the case of Ahab they went anyway even though the prophet of Yahweh told them it was going to be disastrous. And so they didn't even consult Yahweh about this time and so Jehoshaphat joins with him on this campaign something for which he was later rebuked.

And he said which way shall we go up? And he answered by the way of the wilderness of Edom. So they were going to go through Edom and apparently they picked up Edom as a confederate with them. So we had Israel and Judah and Edom together going up against Moab.

And they decided to go through the wilderness of Edom because perhaps that would sneak up around behind them and surprise them. However it involved going through many miles of trackless desert where there was not water. And when you've got an army moving through the desert you've got to supply them and their horses with enough water or else they're going to die.

And this was the problem. They made a mistake. They miscalculated how long their water supply would last.

So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. And they marched on that roundabout route seven days. And there was no water for the army nor for the animals that followed them.

So now this seems like a miscalculation that could have been avoided. I mean they could have done the calculation. We have this many people.

We're going to need this much water for this many days and so forth. Either they took longer making the trip than they expected. Perhaps delayed by something unforeseen.

Or perhaps some of the water sources they intended to encounter on the way were found to be dried up so that the water supply was not what they had assumed it would become en route. So now they're in trouble. They spent seven days in the desert.

They now have no water and they're likely to die of course. And it says in verse 10, And the king of Israel said, Alas, for Yahweh has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab. Now it's interesting that the king of Israel, the northern kingdom, said, Alas, for Yahweh has called us together.

It's clear that he's actually using Yahweh as the main reference to God in this particular setting. Maybe when there's disaster he blames Yahweh. And maybe when there's blessing he gives credit to someone else, some other gods.

But he sees this as the end. These three kings are going to die and their men and be delivered into the hand of Moab. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there no prophet of Yahweh here that we may inquire of Yahweh by him? And one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, Elisha, the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah.

And Jehoshaphat said, The word of Yahweh is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, the king of and the king of Edom, went down to him. Now where Elisha was out there in the desert is hard to say.

Was he out in a cave and they just discovered him out there? Or was he accompanying the armies? It's really hard to say. But somehow Elisha was accessible to them. And so they called, they came down to where he was.

And Elisha said to the king of Israel, Jehoram, what do I have to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother. And the king of Israel said to him, No, for Yahweh has called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And Elisha said, As Yahweh of hosts lives before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you.

In other words, I recognize Jehoshaphat as a man who is godly and I respect him. I don't respect you. And since I don't respect you, I wouldn't pay you any, I wouldn't accommodate you at all.

But since Jehoshaphat's in trouble too, I'm willing to cooperate. But now bring me a musician. And it happened when the musician played that the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha.

And then he prophesied. This is the only case in the Bible where it speaks of musicians being used in order to bring forward a prophecy. Although there may be some implication that this is what music was used for in the references elsewhere in 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel to the sons of the prophets having musical instruments as they wandered around.

They may in fact have commonly used music as a means of putting themselves in the spirit, putting themselves in the mood, conditioning their hearts to receive from God. It's hard to say. But it is evident in Scripture that music is something that has more value than merely as something that pleases the senses, pleases the ears.

Music is a mysterious thing, really. Many things that we take for granted and have around us all the time are really quite mysterious. Why it is that a certain tune or a certain combination of words set to a certain tune or certain harmonies or certain instruments playing certain notes strike you in a way that's not just pleasant to the ear.

Why would one sound pleasant to the ear and another not anyway? I mean, one might argue that a loud sound that's unpleasantly loud would hurt the ears physically and therefore it would be unpleasant. But why is it that certain tunes, if they're not loud, maybe two tunes that are equally loud or two kinds of music that are equally loud, and neither of them physically hurts the ear, one of them irritates the spirit and the other one soothes the spirit. What is there about music like that? It's an amazing thing to think about that music can bring you to tears, even without any lyrics.

Sometimes just the tune can bring you to tears. You add lyrics to it and it really has an impact stronger than just the words themselves on your spirit. Music is something that has a spiritual power to it and it's not surprising therefore that Satan, realizing that, has sought to co-opt the whole industry and has sought to take music and to change our culture by it.

And largely through, in modern times, rock and roll, which is a form of music I don't dislike. I like rock music, but it's simply a fact that the advent of rock and roll was exploited by the devil to bring in messages of sex and drugs and Eastern religion and so forth, especially through the Beatles and not just them but even before them. But the music that was popular to our generation, I don't know about, I suppose the rap music that's popular to some people of the present generation, is full of messages that are, although some of them are clean and pure and love songs and things like that, many of them advocate sin, advocate the occult, advocate even Satanism in some cases, it's been the case.

The culture has responded to it. I mean people worship musicians the way that the pagans used to worship their high priests or their deities. Music is a spiritual thing, apparently.

It certainly isn't physical, I mean it is in the sense that sound waves are physical, but its impact is spiritual. And so we found that David was called in to play music when Saul was tormented by an evil spirit and apparently the playing of the music, which was no doubt worship music since we know that David wrote psalms of worship, as he worshipped God through music, it tended to drive the demon away. And it was the only thing they could find that would relieve the demonic attacks that came upon Saul.

And no doubt that's something that still should be borne in mind when we're seeking to eradicate demons, is that music is one of the tools, one of the weapons that drives them away. Also the sons of the prophets carried musical instruments around and played them. And now Elisha the prophet, a man who on other occasions was quite capable of getting prophecies without music as far as we know, he calls for a musician.

Because as the musician played, so came also the influence of the spirit of God upon him and caused him to get this word that he gave. And he said, thus says Yahweh, make this valley full of ditches. Now some render this, I will make this valley full of ditches.

So God, it may be that God is saying that he will make the valley full of ditches, but it seems like he's telling the soldiers and these kings that they should dig ditches to be receptacles of water. They need water and God's going to send them water, but they have to have some way to contain it. The valley apparently didn't have good areas for large pools of water to gather, so they had to sort of dig their own ponds and dig their own swimming pools.

And then God would fill them for them, for water. Now if these men are dying of thirst and they're out in the desert heat, the extra exertion of digging ditches would be unpleasant and unpopular in the extreme. They've been marching in the heat, they have no water, they're going to be very unhappy, very exhausted, and yet they now have to dig ditches.

But this is a little bit like, you know, other miracles that have been done through Elijah and Elisha. People are asked to actually do something to show their faith, to prepare for something. Like the woman that we're going to read about later, who's in poverty and she only has a little bit of oil.

And Elisha says, well go borrow as many pots and jugs and bottles from your neighbors as you can do empty. And then pouring the oil from her one supply, she filled up all these other vessels. Apparently no matter how many vessels she would have borrowed, she could have filled them all.

After the last one was full, the oil ran out. But she had all this oil then that she was able to sell, which was good, you know, economically for her, that's how God provided for her. But in order for God to supply, she had to provide the containers.

She had to go out and find the containers, empty, so that God could fill them. Here they have to dig ditches so that God could fill them with water. It's like God wants to pour out the blessing, but you've got to be cooperative too.

You've got to be, you've got to provide, in a sense, the place for him to pour it out. We might liken that to the need to have your heart prepared to receive spiritual blessing from God. You have to make yourself a vessel that's suited to receive.

And so here they had to do something, and it would be an act of faith, because there probably was no rain out in the desert. They wouldn't expect, except by the word of the Lord, that any water would be showing up. And for them to exert energy at a time when they probably had very little to spare, and dig in these ditches would be a very unpopular thing to do, and one that they would no doubt object to, unless they were believing that God was going to do something miraculous in sending water to contain them, or to fill them.

And so they did act, apparently in faith, they did dig the ditches. He says, make this valley full of ditches, for thus says the Lord, you shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain. Yet the valley shall be filled with water, so that you, your cattle, and your animals may drink.

Now during the time of Elijah, when there was a drought, that was cured by Elijah's prayers, but it was with rain. The normal way of providing water on a dry land. But this would not be done in that normal way.

It would not just be something that they could mistake for a coincidence. Well, maybe this was one of those rare days when it rained out in the desert, you know, if there was rain. Well, you're not going to see any rain, or hear any rain, or see any wind.

There's not going to be a storm. The water is going to appear, but it's going to appear from out of nowhere, supernaturally. And this is but a trivial thing in the sight of the

Lord.

He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand. Also, you shall attack every fortified city and every choiced city, and shall cut down every good tree, and stop up every spring of water, and ruin every good piece of land with stones. That is in Moab.

In other words, make Moab uninhabitable. Now, it happened in the morning, when the grain offering was offered, that suddenly water came by way of Edom. Now, it did come from somewhere, it didn't just appear, but it appeared from more or less out of nowhere, just through, from the region of Edom.

Water apparently came flowing in and filled up all these ditches that they dug. Yet, they had not seen rain, or heard rain, or had any indication that there was a flood somewhere. This water was coming from, apparently out of nowhere, through Edom, into their ditches.

And when all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, all who were able to bear arms and older were gathered, and they stood at the border. And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun was shining on the water. And the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood, because the sunrise, it was apparently a hazy morning, and the sun looked red, and its reflection on the water looked red.

So, they saw these pools of water, they thought it was blood, and they assumed there had been a great slaughter there. And they said, this is blood. The kings have surely struck swords and have killed one another.

Now they're from Moab to the spoil. So, when they came to the camp of Israel, Israel rose up and attacked the Moabites, so that they fled before them, and they entered their land, killing the Moabites. Now, they might not have been able to kill the Moabites in a direct conflict.

We don't know, you know, how their forces were matched or mismatched against each other. But what happened was the Moabites thought they were all dead. They saw what looked like just pools of blood, and they thought, wow, the Edomites and the Israelites and the Judahites, they've all been enemies.

They couldn't keep a coalition together. They all started fighting with each other, and now they've slaughtered each other. All we have to do is go pick up the spoils.

They probably left their weapons behind in the camp and just went down so they can carry a bunch of stuff out. So, the Moabite troops are all running down upon the camp of Israel, probably unarmed. At least under-armed, and also, you know, not prepared to fight.

They were disorganized. They're not coming in as an organized unit, a fighting unit. They're coming in as a plundering group to take the spoils from what they think is slaughter.

So, they're coming down totally vulnerable and unprepared to fight. And so, when they came, the Israelites rose up and attacked the Moabites. And they fled before them, and they entered their land, killing the Moabites.

Then they destroyed the cities, verse 25, on each man. Each man threw a stone on every good piece of land and filled it. This would make it hard to farm in the future.

And they stopped up all the springs of water and cut down all the good trees, except that they left intact the stones of Kir Haraseth. However, the slingers surrounded and attacked it. And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too intense for him, and he was apparently gone into this city, which had not been taken down yet, but the slingers and stones were surrounding and attacking it, so he saw that he was in trouble, and it was too intense for him, the king of Moab took with him 700 men who drew swords to break through to the king of Edom.

But they could not. They apparently saw the Edomite troops as the weakest link in this coalition, and thought, maybe we can find a way out of here. If we can get through the Edomite armies, we can flee to safety.

We're here surrounded, and we're going to be taken. So, they found, however, that they were not able to overcome the Edomites. And it says, then he, that is the king of Moab, took his eldest son, who would have reigned in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall.

And there was great indignation against Israel, so they departed from him and returned to their own land. Now, this is not only a grotesque thing, it's a confusing thing. It says, the king of Moab offered a human on the wall in front of everybody, offered to his god, apparently invoking his god to come and bring help.

The pagans often practiced human sacrifice, especially the Moabites and the Ammonites, who worshipped Chemosh and Molech, and they required human sacrifice. Now, this son was sacrificed, and that brought an end to the battle. Not because Chemosh helped them out, but because it disgusted the attackers.

The attackers were, especially Israel and Judah, who, although they were corrupt and idolatrous at times, of course, Jehoshaphat was not, but the northern kingdom was, they were not so corrupt as to be practicing human sacrifice at this point. Later, both the northern and the southern kingdom did worship Molech, and they did practice human sacrifice, but at this point they had no stomach for it. When they saw this happen, it just disgusted them, and they left.

Now, it says there was great indignation against Israel. Why? What had Israel done here? It was the Moabites who had offered this sacrifice. Why was there indignation against Israel? And whose indignation was it? Who was feeling this indignation toward Israel? It's not explained.

And yet, there may be some help given to us in Amos chapter 2. I've never seen a commentator agree with me on this, but it's something that's crossed my mind in seeing the comparison of two passages here. In Amos chapter 2, a judgment that Amos, the prophet, is pronouncing upon Moab, the first two chapters of Amos are given over to several short oracles against various nations, including Israel and Judah, but one of those nations is Moab. And in the first three verses, Amos 2, verses 1-3, it says, For three transgressions of Moab, and four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he, Moab, burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.

But I will send fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kuriath. Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting and trumpet sound, and I will cut off the judges from its midst, and so forth. Now, there are multiple transgressions of Moab, but the one that's mentioned is the most heinous.

It was that Moab burned the king of Edom, his bones, to lime. Now, this event we do not have any record of, and why would that in itself be such an offense? I mean, the king of Edom, what does God care about him? The Edomites are not God's people. And under what circumstances did the Moabites burn the bones of the king of Edom? Why would showing such an indignity to the king of Edom, as burning his bones, be such an offense that God would say, I'm going to destroy Moab for that? But, it seems to me very possible, like I said, I have not met commentators or read commentators that agreed with me, that were talking about this story in 2 Kings 3. I'll tell you what I'm thinking.

When it says he, verse 27, the king of Moab, took his oldest son, who would have reigned in his place, this is not the son of the king of Moab. It's not his own oldest son. The his is a reference to the king of Edom, mentioned in the previous verse.

It says in the previous verse, that the Moabite king, Misha, took with him 700 men who drew swords to break through to the king of Edom. But they could not. Then he took his, that is the king of Edom's, oldest son, who would have reigned in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall.

Now, rather than the Moabite king offering his own son, it is at least possible that when he tried to break through with his 700 men against the king of Edom, he could not succeed, but he may have captured the Edomite prince, the next king of Edom, and sacrificed him and burned him on the wall. This would agree well enough with the wording of Amos, that Moab had burned the bones of the king of Edom, that is the heir apparent to the throne. He who would have reigned, it specifically said in Kings, he who would have reigned in his stead.

But, you see, the wording is almost always interpreted in Kings, 2 Kings 3.27, as his oldest son is Misha's, the Moabite king's oldest son. But, if in fact it was the Edomite king's oldest son, we see, we read, the king of Edom is very much in the proximity to the word he or his. And there had been an attack on the Edomite troops.

The king of Edom was there, and perhaps his son, the prince, was there too. And the king of Moab took his oldest son, perhaps in an abortive attempt to break through the Edomite ranks, they nonetheless took a prisoner, the prince, and took him back into the city and sacrificed him on the wall. And that was an offense to everybody.

I mean, of course it would be an offense to people to see even the Moabite king sacrifice his own son. However, the attacking armies might not be so offended by it, since they would have probably killed his son anyway. I mean, in a sense, it's disgusting to see a man kill his own son as a sacrifice, but not that they'd be all that concerned about the prince of Moab.

They were probably hoping to kill the king and the prince anyway, and everybody else there. So, the greater offense would be if they saw the Moabites captured the prince of Edom and burned him on the wall. And that could also explain why there was great indignation against Israel.

By whom? By the Edomites. The Edomites who had lost their prince because they had joined into one of Israel's battles to help Israel. They had experienced an ignominious loss and a great loss of their crown prince, and all because they were just there to help Israel out.

They were just allies that Israel had gathered along the way, along with Judah, to help them out. This would explain possibly why the Edomites, in losing their prince in this fashion, this horrible event, would feel indignation toward Israel. Over the fact that they had been drawn into this thing by Israel, at Israel's request.

So, I mean, that is a possibility that I think, frankly, I think it's kind of likely. But since I don't know of any other teachers that have ever suggested this, I may not be right. But if it's not this, then what is Amos referring to? Well, there could be some otherwise unrecorded time when Moab burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime, but so what? I mean, burning bones is not unheard of elsewhere.

I mean, it's not the way to show honor to a king. But God would not necessarily be standing for the honor of Edom and the Edomite king. But this horrible offering of this son on the wall of Moab, which became offensive to everybody, may be the atrocity he's referring to.

Not that they just burned bones. They killed the prince, an innocent victim, and offered him to a god. That could be something that would explain why God's so disgusted with

Moab.

Everybody else was too on this occasion. Again, if the Moabite king had only offered his own son, while we would find that disgusting, in Israel it was not that unusual. Because in their religion they offered their children to Chimash.

So, in other words, it wouldn't be that striking a thing. I mean, it might be kind of yucky and disgusting to the Israelites to see this ritual take place. But they would know that this is what these Moabites do all the time.

This is how they worship their god. I mean, it's not going to turn our stomachs so much that we're going to retreat. We're going to call off the battle just because they're doing what they always do.

But you see, if it was the son of the king of Edom that was offered, that would be far more offensive to the invading forces. Especially to the Edomites and their allies, Israel and Judah in this case. Chapter 4 A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, Your servant, my husband, is dead, and you know that your servant feared Yahweh.

And the creditor is coming to take away my two sons to be his slaves. Now, we don't know who this woman was or who her husband had been, except that he was of the sons of the prophets. Josephus actually suggested that her husband was Obadiah.

Not Obadiah the prophet who wrote the book of Obadiah, but Obadiah the man who had served secretly as an ally of Yahweh in the administration of Ahab. This man Obadiah was the one who had preserved a hundred prophets of Yahweh from the persecution that Jezebel was instigating. And he, you know, he was a good guy.

Although we are not ever told that he was a prophet. And therefore the idea that he was one of the sons of the prophets that this woman had been married to doesn't seem very likely. Although it's Josephus says it, Josephus speculates a lot, many things, and that strikes me as not a likely speculation.

But this woman had lost her husband, had two sons, and now apparently there were debts that her husband had incurred. Josephus even said that this was Obadiah and he had debts because he had helped the prophets. You know, he had been feeding these prophets in the cave at his own expense and incurred great debts.

And then he died leaving the debts to his wife to pay. Not likely. It's more likely that Obadiah was taking food from the king's table and giving it to the prophets.

But we just don't know. In any case, this is an anonymous widow of an anonymous prophet. And her problem is she's got debts.

And someone who she owes money to says, I've got to collect tomorrow. If you don't have the money, I'm going to take your sons as slaves or indentured servants. That would be legal.

Many people had to sell themselves or their children into indentured servitude because there were debts they couldn't pay. And this woman was in that position. And she's saying, you know, we're in this position and yet my husband was a man who feared the Lord at a time when not many people did.

In apostate Israel, my husband was one of the true prophets of God. And it's a shame for his sons to be taken into slavery or indentured servitude. It says slaves, but the reason I keep saying indentured servitude is because they were Jewish.

Jewish slaves under the law could not be kept permanently as slaves. They would have to be released in the year of Jubilee. But if that didn't happen in their lifetimes, because it only happened once every 50 years, they would also be given the option of release after seven years, if they wish.

An Israelite slave could only be kept for seven years against his wishes. At seven years, he was offered his freedom. That was not necessarily true of foreign slaves.

So Elisha said to her, what shall I do for you? Tell me what you have in the house. And she said, your maid servant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil. This would be probably olive oil, which was used for many kinds of applications in the Middle East.

As a skin lotion, as a cooking, you know, condiment. And, you know, oil was very valuable. It was from olives and it was used for many things.

So she, of course, had some in the house, as most households would. But she didn't have much of anything else, just a jar of oil. Then he said, go borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors, empty vessels.

Do not gather just a few. And when you have, come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons, then pour into all those vessels and set aside the full ones. So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her, and she poured it out.

Now these vessels were probably large and small, just miscellaneous vessels they could borrow empty from their neighbors. Some of them might have been very large, probably got as large as they could. And so there would be probably some that would, if filled with oil, would be quite a quantity.

And so she poured the oil into these vessels. Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, bring me another vessel. And he said to her, there's not another vessel.

So the oil ceased. So apparently there was no limit to the amount of oil that she could have had, except the limitation of the ability to receive it, of the vessels that were collected to receive it. God, in other words, can supply infinitely.

But often we, our limits are limited not by so much God's ability to supply, miraculously, but by our preparation and our ability to receive. If she had borrowed a hundred more vessels, she probably could have filled them all with oil, I think. But as soon as the last vessel was full, and she said, give me the next one.

She said, there's no more. So that was the end. The oil ran out.

Nothing more to receive it. And so there was no more supply. But there was a lot.

There was a lot. There could have been more, but there was a lot. And then she came and told the man of God, and he said, go sell the oil and pay your debt.

And you and your sons live on the rest. So there was enough not only to pay off the debt, a debt so great that she would have had to sell both of her sons into slavery. She could pay that off without selling them into slavery, and then they could live off the rest.

I don't know how much there was there. It must have been a house full of oil. And it was worth a lot.

Now, it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a notable woman. I love this story. This story is just really a cool story.

Shunem, she was a Shunemite. So was Abishag. Remember the girl that kept David warm when he was old? She was also a Shunemite.

Now, the woman spoken of in the Song of Solomon is said to be a Shulamite. No one knows what a Shulamite is, but some scholars think it might be a textual corruption or just another name for a Shunemite. As I've said before, some think that maybe the woman that Solomon loved was this Abishag, who was the most beautiful woman in the kingdom, who was a Shunemite.

And she's referred to as a Shulamite in the Song of Solomon. But this woman is also a Shunemite, just because Shunemite means someone from this place called Shunem, a city. And there was a notable woman, and she constrained him to eat some food.

So it was, as often as he passed by, that he turned in there to eat some food. Now, he's still living in an apostate nation, but there are a remnant. Remember, God told Elijah there were 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

This woman and her husband were apparently among that remnant. And so they wanted to help the prophet out, and they offered him food whenever he came by. And she said to her husband, Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God who passes by us

regularly.

Please let us make a small upper room on the wall, and let us put a bed up there for him, and a table and a chair and a lampstand, so it will be whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there. And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there. Now, a bed, by the way, was a luxury.

Most people who were not wealthy would sleep on the floor. But they wanted to put a bed in there for him. They wanted to make it nice for him.

And this was their offering to Yahweh. This is the way they could help out God, just by showing hospitality to the man of God. I remember that when I lived in Oregon, I would receive several times a year invitations to go and teach for a week at a time in Santa Cruz, where I had once lived and where I had a lot of ministry connections.

And I would come down with my family, which was at that time four small children, and my wife and I. And we would go down, and initially we were staying with relatives down there, but our family got too large, and their house got too small, and so it was very uncomfortable to us and our relatives for our whole family to come stay a week in their house. I remember I prayed one day that God would provide for me when I would come down to teach there, a place that would accommodate our family. And before that week was over, I never announced this interest.

It was just something I prayed for privately. But before the week was over, three different people had come and offered us, whenever we would be in town, an apartment for our family. One was actually a little cottage behind their house, quite adequate for our family.

One was an apartment at a campground, and the other one was an upstairs area fairly large in their house. And all three of these people, without me even putting out any requests, came and said, whenever you're in town, your whole family can stay here for free. It was a direct answer to prayer, because I'd been coming down several times previously, and had never thought to pray for God to supply a place where I could stay when I was in the area.

And it was getting more and more uncomfortable. But these people didn't know that. It's just when I prayed for it, God supplied it.

But I often think about this woman, and those people who offered that place to stay to us, that they considered that this was a man of God coming to minister in their area, and they could help house me and my family. So this Shunammite woman also does the same for Elisha. It's her gift to God.

And so he went up there and lay down there once, and he said to Gehazi, his servant, now Elisha had been Elijah's servant, now he has a servant named Gehazi. And he says

to his servant, call this Shunammite woman. When he had called her, she stood before him.

And he said to him, say now to her, look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king, or to the commander of the army? And she answered, I dwell among my own people. Now apparently he was saying, I could possibly get the king to give you maybe a better piece of land, or something somewhere, to know I like, she said, I like where I am.

I dwell where I want to live with my people. So he said, what then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, actually she has no son, and her husband is old. And he said, call her.

And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway. Then he said, about this time next year you shall embrace a son. And she said, no my lord, man of God, do not lie to your aid servant.

And the woman conceived. I mean she thought he was lying, it was too good to be true. But it did happen, she conceived and bore a son.

And when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her. So the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers.

And he said to his father, my head, my head. So he said to his servant, carry him to his mother. Now, we don't know what his problem was with his head.

Some think it was sun stroke. Others think it's more likely that it was cerebral malaria, which is very common in the region. And that he had sudden sharp pains in his head, which proved to be fatal.

And so the father was out working and said to his servant, take him to his mother. I picture this son being maybe four or five years old, maybe even younger. But he's out working with his father and servants.

When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees until noon and then died. Now Elisha didn't happen to be there at the time, he was elsewhere when this happened. And she went up and laid him on a bed, on the bed of the man of God.

And shut the door upon him and went out. Then she called to her husband and said, please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys. That I may run to the man of God and come back.

So he said, why are you going to him today? It is neither the new moon nor the Sabbath. And she said, it is well. You know, she didn't tell him what she was going for.

Seems like he would have understood that if her son had taken ill that she might be

going about that subject. But the father did not yet know that the son had died. She didn't tell her husband at this point.

Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, drive and go forward. Do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you. So she departed and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

And so it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, look, there's the Shunammite woman. Please run now to meet her. And say to her, is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child? And she answered, it is well.

Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet. But Gehazi came near to push her away. But the man of God said, let her alone, for her soul is in deep distress.

And the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me. That's an interesting thing, you know, that Elijah and Elisha both would often know things about people that they were not told. Even, I mean, it's strange.

This is a case where God didn't tell him. He says, okay, I can't figure this out. This woman's in deep distress.

I wonder what this is about. God hasn't shown me what it is. And she said, did I ask a son of my Lord? Did I not say, do not deceive me? And Elisha figured out what it was about.

And he said to Gehazi, get yourself ready. Take my staff in your hand and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him.

If anyone greets you, do not answer. But lay my staff on the face of the child. And the mother of the child said, as Yahweh lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.

Same thing Elisha said to Elijah. So he rose and followed her. He said, Gehazi, I had possibly, because Elisha may have been himself an old man and couldn't travel quickly.

And so he thought, quick, no time to waste. But then he followed along with the woman behind. So Gehazi went on ahead of them and laid the staff on the face of the child.

But there was neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him and told him, saying, the child has not awakened. And when Elisha came into the house, there was the child lying dead on the bed.

He went in, therefore, shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord. And he went up and lay on the child and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands. And he stretched himself out on the child and the flesh of the child became warm.

He returned and walked back and forth in the house again, went up and stretched himself out on him. Then the child sneezed seven times and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi and said, call this Shunammite woman.

So he called her and when she came in to him, he said, pick up your son. So she went in, fell at his feet and bowed to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out.

Now this means of raising him from the dead is really peculiar. And it's hard to know what it really means. You know, putting his eyes next to his eyes, his mouth to his mouth, his hands to his hands.

Obviously he kind of covered the child's body completely and warmed it with his own body heat. And then wandered around in the room and prayed again. You know, the whole protracted procedure, taking as while as it did and him going back to pray and doing this again and again.

It sounds like there's like a spiritual battle going on. That he was waging a spiritual war over this child's life. And it's just interesting how these miracles are done this way.

They're not done in any predictable or any explicable way. It's like weird things. And that's true of Jesus too.

And putting mud in someone's eyes and saying, wash it out. Or doing bizarre things like that. They may be just ways of, like I said, it may be that there's no specific meaning to the actions themselves.

Except that they're attention getting. They show that the prophet is doing something. And that what is accomplished is through the prophet's actions.

Even though the actions themselves might be absolutely unnecessary parts of it. It's clearly a connection is made between the prophet and the result by the prophet's activities. But the child was restored.

And I don't know why that story is so moving for you. There are certain stories that are really hard for me to read without getting moved in the Old Testament. I can tell you what some of them are, but I won't.

But this one has always just been really quite moving for some reason. And there's other stories about people dying and rising from the dead and so forth. But there's just such an interesting connection that I feel to this mother.

And also to Elisha himself. Just his sympathy for the woman's condition. We see what looks to me like Elisha has much more of a visible heart in this situation.

Than say we ever saw in Elijah. Elijah seemed like a crusty, hard-bitten, no-nonsense kind of a guy. Whereas Elisha seems to be much more sensitive and sympathetic.

I don't know if I'm reading into it something that's not there. But that's what I've always picked up about this. And as I said, I think Elisha is much more a picture of Christ than Elijah is.

And as the successor to Elijah, perhaps Christ and Christ's new covenant. As a successor to the old covenant, Elijah and Moses represent the old covenant. And their successors, Joshua and Elisha, represent Christ.

I see much more of a Christ-like heart in Elisha. In his miracles and the stories about him. And there's just something moving about this.

And Elisha returned to Gilgal. And there was a famine in the land. Now the sons of the prophets were sitting before him.

And he said to his servant, put on a large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets. These guys apparently lived communally. And they ate communally.

Just like we're doing here. So one went out into the field to gather herbs. And found a wild vine.

And gathered from it a lap full of wild gourds. And came and sliced them into this pot of stew. Apparently not knowing what they were.

They were not edible. As though they did not know what they were. So they just found something.

This looks good. Let's put that in the stew too. And it says, then they served it to the men to eat.

Now it happened as they were eating the stew. That they cried out and said, oh man of God, there's death in the pot. And they could not eat it.

Now I don't know exactly what kind of plant this was. There's obviously many different species of gourds. Apparently some of them are poisonous.

And they're not very good to put in your vegetable stew. And someone tasted it and realized, oh this is bad. This is not, we can't eat this.

This will kill us if we eat it. So he said, then bring some flour. And he put it in the pot.

And said, serve it to the people. That they may eat. And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

So again, this is putting flour in the pot. It thickens the stew maybe a little bit. But it certainly wouldn't have any effect on poison.

So it's almost again, seemingly a nonsensical action. Just like putting salt at the source of

the water. It's just almost an action.

It's almost like you could have done anything. You could have put dirt in it. And it would have probably fixed it.

There's no physical or natural connection to the action and the result. Then, a man came from Baal Shalisha. And brought the man of God bread of the first fruits.

20 loaves of barley bread. These were probably just biscuit sized. Single serving loaves.

And newly ripened grain in the knapsack. And he said, give it to the people that they may eat. Now this was a gift somebody brought to the sons of the prophets.

To feed their community. But it wasn't enough. There were 20 of these biscuit sized loaves.

And there were 100 sons of the prophets to eat them. And it says, his servant said, what? Shall I set this before 100 men? He said again, give it to the people that they may eat. For thus says Yahweh, they shall eat and have some left over.

So he set it before them and they ate and had some left over. According to the word of the Lord. So again we see a miracle that resembles that of Christ.

Feeding multitudes. Not quite as large a multitude in this case. But nonetheless what appears to be an expansion of the amount of food available.

A small amount available. Certainly not enough for 100 men. And yet they all eat enough.

And there's some left over. Just as there was when Jesus fed the 5,000 or fed the 4,000. So these stories are just anecdotes about the life of Elisha.

They don't really carry forward the history of the kings at all. But you can see the author of this book is not only interested in preserving a political history of the nation. But he wants to show that God was present in the nation.

Now, particularly with his prophets. A lot of the miracles just take place among the prophets themselves. Like the pot of stew being healed or them having the lowest multiply.

They were no doubt, we could say, the remnant of God freeing people. And God was still active with them even though the nation was apostate. As he is with us even in times of apostasy of our nation.

So we see documentation that God is working miracles for his people. At a time when most people in their country are not even paying attention to him.