

Elisha #1

Notes for 7 Mar

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Read: [2 Kings 4](#)

Compassion

Four major themes develop from the four incidents linked to this chapter:

1. Compassion for the poor.
2. Care for women and children.
3. Power over death.
4. God's concern for our every-day needs.

The **first** story concerns a widow who is heavily in debt, with the threat that her two sons will be taken as slaves by the creditors.

The **second** story is about a well-to-do Shunammite woman who had been very hospitable to Elisha. However, from her perspective, she could only look forward to a bleak future as she had no son, and her husband was old. However, eventually she produced a son. When he was somewhat older, he had a brain haemorrhage and died.

The **third** story is about a poisoned pot of stew being served up to a company of prophets. Miraculously, white flour was added and this appeared to be the antidote to the poison.

The **fourth** story is concerning the feeding of a hundred men and possibly their families, with twenty loaves of bread. After they were satisfied, it appears some of the loaves were left over.

As we look at these incidents in some detail, it may be of some interest to examine parallel incidents in the NT.

Some of us have, on occasions, appraised the OT as giving a harsher concept of Yahweh than the NT. However, I can't help thinking that if we look beyond the 'noise' of some of these stories, they may well be pointing to a conclusion that there is little or no difference between the two versions of Yahweh. Also, I can't help thinking that the authors of a number of stories that we have studied in the recent past, at times have painted Yahweh, as a great military leader, because in ancient middle eastern culture, it was important for the status and power of their gods, to be so portrayed.

"The Widow's Oil"

The first story is found in 2 Kings 4:1-7. The widow had been the wife of one of the company of prophets and she was desperately poor, in fact she was in debt. A miracle occurred whereby she could fill her jars, owned and borrowed, with oil. Oil, apparently, was like having currency.

There is something of a parallel of this in Matthew 6:25-34.

- Why do you think the widow was given this blessing in her hour of need?

"The Raising Of The Shunammite's Son"

The second story is found in 2 Kings 4:8-37. This story reflects, hospitality, care, need, anxiety and love. There are a number of different layers within the story.

There is something of a parallel of this found in Luke 7:11-17, and Mark 5:35-43.

- Which layer stands out for you and why?

"The Poisoned Stew"

The third story is found in 2 Kings 4:38-41.

The story is set during a famine, and the obvious way forward was to supplement food that was available, with that which is edible, but grown wild. If you take this approach, you need to have a good knowledge of the characteristics of the wild plants. The servant didn't. The stew was made but those indulging realised that there was poison in the mix. Elisha neutralised the poison. Have a look at Mark 16:18.

- This story may raise some questions among our community what is one of the main spiritual lessons that this story teaches?

"Feeding The Hundred Men With Twenty Loaves"

The fourth story is found in 2 Kings 4:42-44.

A man came from Baal Shalishah, (means 'lord of three things', but more importantly, geographically, it was where fruit first ripened). The important part of the story was that this provision was totally inadequate to feed 100 men and most likely their families. However, a miracle occurred, and not only were they satisfactorily fed, but there was food remaining. There are parallels found in Matt 14:13-21 and Mark 8:1-9.

- Can you give examples where God has provided for you in difficult circumstances?

Big Question:

We often state or imply in our discussions that the NT is primarily about compassion.

- Do you think there is a tendency to misunderstand the OT, and compassion underpins many of the OT stories, and one of the purposes of the NT writers was to build on this?

If you get a chance, [please read this article](#). It makes the case that Christian compassionate values has had a profound impact on western values, including those of many atheists.

I have come to the conclusion that the OT stories had a deep impact on the development of the concept of compassion in the NT.

- Do you agree?