

BOOK OF 2 KINGS
WHEN DEATH WAS IN THE POT!
2 KINGS 4:38-44

Introduction

This story takes place in Gilgal which we have talked about before. It is just northwest of Jericho and about ten to twelve miles east of Jerusalem. And it was one of three places where some of the “sons of the prophets” were being trained. We might think of those places as Bible Schools or a seminaries.

After Elijah was translated to heaven, the operation and care for these three schools fell primarily to Elisha, who was his successor!

Tonight we will see yet another miracle of the LORD by the hand of Elisha! In this miracle, Elisha heals a pot full of stew—I kid you not!

Have you ever had a meal that needed healing? I know I’ve gotten a hold on a few of those in my lifetime!

We will read the verses as we deal with them:

I. WE SEE THERE WAS DEARTH IN THE LAND! (Vs. 38a)

The word *dearth* indicates that **there was a severe famine in the land**. This was a judgment from the LORD in response to the sins of Israel—primarily their idolatry!

Prior to the children of Israel entering the Promised Land, the LORD spelled out the blessings of obeying Him and consequences of disobeying Him in *Deuteronomy 28*!

The blessings of obedience...Deuteronomy 28: 1–8

The curse of disobedience...Deuteronomy 28:14-19, 23-24, 42

The children of Israel were warned but they did not heed the LORD’s plainly spoken words.

In our own dear country, we also have a *dearth* going on. It is a *dearth* of the Word of God. We have more Churches and preachers in this country than anywhere else in the world. You would think that we would be a real “*Christian Nation*” with all the Bible that is supposedly being taught and preached. The problem is in many cases it is NOT!

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Amos 8:11—“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD”

Amos was talking about Israel, but Paul indicated something similar in *2 Timothy 4:2-4*—“2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

The preaching of sound doctrine has been replaced by **feel-good talks, musical concerts, drama, and other things that appeal to the flesh!**

What has happened is that our nation by-and-large has forgotten God!

Sin is eating away at the core of our nation such as we have never seen up to this time! Our nation is in spiritual shambles! Oh there is a lot of spirituality being embraced, but it is the wrong kind! But God and His truth are being pushed off and rejected like never before in our country—especially in those who are in places of authority!

The LORD is also rejected because of idolatry! The idolatry of materialism and covetousness have been embraced while the one true God is ignored! People have to have bigger and better. Many have a buy now and bankrupt later mentality. We see people working longer and longer hours just to stay afloat.

It is seen even in many Churches today! So many Churches build larger, prettier buildings and wind up deep in debt to do it! They have forgotten that **the borrower is servant to the lender!** And many have done away with sound preaching because they have to draw a big crowd to get the offerings to be able to pay for their buildings!
And sound preaching doesn’t draw big crowds anymore!

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The pure Word of God has been replaced in many Churches by all kinds of watered down Bible wannabes that have been changed by men into something that is NOT the Word of God, all in the name of profit!

This recent pandemic has aided in the Spiritual *dearth* in our land! People have gotten used to staying home from Church by the government mandated closures and now that Churches are opening again, way too many are wilfully forsaking the assembly!

So, back to our text, we see there was this *physical dearth* in the land because of Israel's *spiritual dearth* caused by her idolatrous practices!

II. WE SEE THERE WAS DINNER THAT WAS NEEDED! (Vs 38b)
"...and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him..."
Elisha has these "*sons of the prophets*", these preacher boys sitting before him probably receiving instruction from him of some sort.

And I'm gathering that they might have been looking hungry, or maybe their stomachs were growling, or maybe they were holding up signs saying "*feed me!*"

We are not told, but if these were young men...we know, don't we! Or maybe Elisha was the one that was hungry! Preachers have got to eat too, you know!

III. WE SEE THERE WAS DIRECTION FOR RELIEF! (Vs. 38c)
"...and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets."
When people are hungry, there is only one thing that needs to be done! Feed them. Elisha tells his servant (Gehazi ?) to get a pot and start a meal. The word "*seethe*" means to boil up. When you set a pot to boil and it starts boiling, you know that the good stuff will probably not be long in coming!

IV. WE SEE THERE WAS DISCERNMENT THAT WAS NEEDED!
(Vs 39)

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Here is the account. One of the young men went out to gather herbs for the pottage. And that is where the problem came. While he was gathering herbs, he found a vine with wild gourds and thought that these gourds might just add a little substance to this pot of stew!

The problem was that this young man did not know the difference between that which was edible and that which was poisonous!

So he picked up a lap full of these gourds and shredded them into the pot of pottage! He didn't ask, he just threw them in the pot!

Here is a lesson that we can learn from this account. Many Believers do not know the difference between good spiritual food that comes from the pure Word of God and that which is a poisonous substitute!

Too many folks assume that because something calls itself "*Christian*" or is purchased at a so-called "*Christian*" book store or website, that it must indeed be "*Christian*." Some are not willing to do a little research about the actual source or ask a man of God before they feed on such things! Be careful what you spiritually chew on and swallow!

We need to be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11:

Acts. 17:11—"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

We who are Believers have the Holy Spirit to guide us through the Holy Scriptures! *John 16:13*—"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

So we ought to be able to discern the difference between that which is spiritually edible and that which is poisonous teachings.
(i.e. That which should be received and that which should be spit out!)
But it takes some digging in the Scriptures to discern!

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V. WE SEE THERE WAS DEATH IN THE POT! (Vs. 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.”

As soon as they began to eat, they realized that something wasn't quite right! Was it the taste? We're not told! But they were crying out *“...there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof.”*

(e.g. Have you ever eat something that maybe looked good and then you taste it and find out it is not? — Salisbury steak was really liver.)

It is not pleasant to have something unpleasant touch your palate!

Those that sensed the danger with the first taste did not keep the danger to themselves. They could have just not eaten. But they cared enough to warn their fellow brethren and their leader of the danger!

We should know that our adversary, the devil, tries to poison the minds of people with false doctrines. When you know right doctrine, you can sense when something is wrong!

Take the doctrine of Christ for example. The world tries to portray Christ's death as a martyr's death instead of what it really was: ***a willing, vicarious, substitutionary, and atoning death for all men's sin.*** The world tries to explain away Christ's glorious resurrection with theories of their own small minds.

But when you know the truth, you can point out the error and fallacies of the world that are dangerous to those who ingest them!

VI. WE SEE THERE WAS DISTRESS OF HEART! (Vs. 40)

By proclaiming the truth of the situation, it might have been offensive to the one who put these poisonous gourds in the pot. Many people in our day don't speak up because they don't want to offend anybody! But folks very lives were at stake if they had continued to eat this poisonous stew! They had to speak up!

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This applies to the exposing error with the truth as well! We must proclaim the truth no matter who it offends! People's eternal souls are at stake!

Folks can get offended when we point out the fact that those who are not born again are hell deserving sinners no matter how “good” this world thinks that they are!

When we see our sin as God sees it, it is not a pretty picture. Sin affects the entire man (body, soul, spirit) and separates men from God!

Sinful man does not like their sin being called what it is!

(e.g. John the Baptist calling Herod out on his adultery)

(e.g. Elijah calling out Ahab and his wife Jezebel for their wickedness and idolatry!)

Preachers run into problems when they preach on certain subjects and so many preachers aren't willing to preach on those subjects!

(e.g. Faithfulness, Fashions, Family or Finances)

The Word of God throws its spotlight on the true intents of the heart. **Understand that when the Word of God convicts your heart, it is not the preacher, but rather God's Holy Spirit that has taken the Word and searched your heart and exposed your sin!**

If a man of God loves God's Word the way he should, he will not overlook passages dealing with the difficult subjects. But rather, he will preach the whole counsel of God with a heart that loves God and loves people enough to tell them the truth!

VII. WE SEE THE DELIVERANCE IN THE MEAL! (Vs. 41)

Elisha acted immediately! He knew several things:

These young men were hungry!

They could not study and do the work of God without eating!

They were looking to him for direction!

So, he took swift action! The meal was the antidote to the poison!

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Meal in the Bible is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as a type of the Word of God!

What a picture this is! This world is full of poison! It needs Jesus to change it! It needs the pure Word of Truth!

We must use the Gospel of the LORD Jesus Christ to counteract the poison of the world!

We can do this by giving good Gospel tracts to those we come into contact!

We can do this by witnessing of Christ to folks as the LORD gives us opportunity!

We have a *dearth* in this land of hearing the Word of God, specifically the Gospel of Christ!

May we be diligent in these last days to share the Gospel with those who need it!

VIII. WE SEE YET ANOTHER MIRACLE MEAL! (Vs 42-44)

Baal-shalishah was a town close by to Gilgal so this incident may have taken place in very close proximity in time as the preceding one.

Now I want you to remember that there is a famine in the land. But there came a man who was apparently a Believer, to Elisha the man of God, who, in spite of the famine, brought a firstfruits offering of his harvest to God in the form of 20 loaves of barley bread and an unspecified number of full ears of corn on the cob!

In spite of the possibility of coming up short of food himself during the famine, he chose to be obedient to God's law anyway!

This is a great testimony of faith, trust, and obedience to God as he trusted the LORD to take care of him! He was living by faith!

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When Elisha suggested to his servant that the food be given to feed the 100 men assembled (these sons of the prophets), the servant's response indicated that it was far too little to feed so many men with!

Nevertheless, Elisha ordered him to distribute it and assured him that the LORD had promised him there would not only be plenty, but some would be leftover!

The servant obeyed Elisha and God multiplied the food just as He had promised. Proving once again that He is the LORD Who provides and fulfills what He says He will do!