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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2329 ~ Elisha Raises a Child to Life.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

Elisha, a prophet of God to the northern kingdom of Israel, moved about from place to place helping people in their times of distress. In today's *Bible Adventure,* a family in the town of Shunem, just north of Jezreel, helped Elisha and in turn, Elisha helped this family back.

A successful and wealthy woman living in Shunem with her elderly husband one day invited Elisha to their home for a meal. And they invited him back again to join them whenever Elisha passed through that way. The woman, who isn't given a name in the Scriptures, asked her husband if they could do more for this man of God. They agreed on building an upper room on the side of their house and furnishing it so that when Elisha came to Shunem, he could rest in his own special quarters. In 2nd Kings, Chapter 4, it's mentioned for the first time in the Scriptures that at this point, Elisha now had an assistant named Gehazi.

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The woman took her son's dead body up to Elisha's room and laid it on his bed, shut the door and prepared to see Elisha. She called to her husband for one of the young servants and a donkey for her to run and visit Elisha and then she'd return. Her husband wanted to know why the woman wanted to go and visit Elisha on a normal working day, but she didn't admit to him that her precious son was dead. Instead, she had faith that Elisha would raise up her son back to life again. So she just told her husband that it would be alright.

She saddled the donkey and she and the young servant rode as hard as they could for 18 miles or so where Elisha was stationed at Mount Carmel. Elisha and Gehazi saw them coming in the distance and Gehazi went out to meet the woman. Again, the woman told the servant that everything was alright, as she was determined to speak about her son only with Elisha. When Elisha understood that her son had died, he gave his staff to Gehazi and told him to go quickly without stopping to the boy and lay the staff on his face.

The staff didn't have magical powers; but it did represent God's power. Nor did the staff bring the boy back to life, but it's possible that it may have prevented the boy's body from further decay. But the woman didn't have faith in Gehazi's mission. She told Elisha that he needed to go too and that she wouldn't be leaving without him. Gehazi came back to Elisha and the woman as they travelled towards Shunem to say that the child hadn't shown any signs of life with the staff laid on his face.

In Shunum, Elisha found the dead boy on his bed and closed the door so that he and the dead child were alone with God. Then Elisha prayed to the Lord and warmed up the child's body by lying on top of him. After further prayer by Elisha that pleaded for the life of the boy to be returned, the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. Elisha, by God's power, raised the boy back to life. Elisha called Gehazi to get the child's mother, who came and fell at Elisha's feet, bowing down to the ground and full of thankfulness. Then she picked up her child and she left the room.

Despite this wonderful outcome of faith and healing for this family, this isn't the end of the story of the Shunammite woman. Later in Chapter 8 of 2nd Kings, her story continues. Elisha advised the woman and her family to leave Israel because a seven-year famine was about to begin. She and her household took Elisha's advice and they went to live in Philistine territory for seven years. After the famine had finished, she returned to find that her house and land had been taken over by someone else. By this stage, the woman's husband had died. Widows without a son had no financial support and that was why at the time Elisha was enjoying this special room the family had built for him, Gehazi suggested to Elisha that the woman would need a boy to help her in the future.

The woman and her son went to the king to beg for her land and house to be restored to her. When she arrived, she found Gehazi talking to the king and telling him about Elisha's miracles, including Elisha restoring her own son to life! When Gehazi saw her enter, he told the king that she was the woman he'd just been talking about. The king commanded that the woman's property be given back to her, plus the value of the crops that her fields had produced during the time that she'd been away.

In Chapter 4 of 2nd Kings, there are two more instances of Elisha helping people with their problems. After Elisha had raised the woman's son by God's power at Shunem, he went to the school of the prophets at Gilgal. In that region, the famine was already starting to grip the land. One day as Elisha was teaching a group of prophets, he sent Gehazi out to gather herbs to make a stew for the people to eat. Gehazi found a vine bearing wild gourds or fleshy fruit and returned with a lot of them to slice into a stew, even though no one knew what these particular plants were.

When the stew was served to the prophets, they tasted the bitterness of the gourds and thought the stew had been poisoned. They consulted Elisha, who called for some flour. He put the flour into the pot, the bad taste disappeared and everyone ate the stew without any bitterness or harm. The Scriptures don't say that the gourds were really poisonous or how exactly the flour corrected the stew. Like the salt that Elisha put into the spring at Jericho to make the water drinkable, the flour in this case symbolised the healing and purifying power of God. It was God, not the flour, that made the stew safe to eat.

On another instance, one day a man travelled a distance to bring to the prophets at Gilgal a sack of fresh grain and 20 loaves of barley bread, made from the first grain of this harvest. Elisha told Gehazi to set the loaves before the hundred people to eat. Loaves of bread made in Biblical times were much smaller than they are today and even Gehazi was embarrassed to set such small portions before the men. But Elisha repeated his instructions to Gehazi and added: "This is what the Lord says: 'Everyone will eat, and there will even be some left over!'" When Gehazi and Elisha gave the loaves of bread to the people, there was plenty for all to be satisfied and even some left over, just as the Lord had promised.

This reminds us of the Lord Jesus feeding thousands of people in Matthew, Chapters 14 and 15. The first miracle was feeding of 5000 and apart from Jesus's resurrection is the only miracle to be included in all four gospels, despite each gospel adding certain details that the other gospels don't. Why did the gospel writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John consider this story to be so important?

When Christ fed the crowds that day, He began with only five barley loaves and two fish found in a boy's lunch. To feed 5,000 people with only that small amount is indeed miraculous, but the Greek term used indicates that the '5,000' number quoted was men only, for in the Gospel of Matthew, it adds: "besides women and children." Many Bible scholars believe the actual number fed that day could have easily been as many as 12,000 to 15,000 people.

Luke added that the location of this miracle was near a town called Bethsaida. The name is usually translated ‘house of fishing’ and shows their closeness to the Sea of Galilee and the town’s major industry. John says that the event took place near the time of the Jewish Passover, which explains why the grass was green, as it was spring time.

In the Greek, there are a number of translation details that show this miracle was done for the Jewish people. After the people had eaten, the crowd’s reaction was: “Surely this is the Prophet Who is to come into the world,” but Jesus, knowing that the people intended to come to make Him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain to be by Himself. The people didn’t understand that Jesus needed to fulfil His role as the Obedient Servant by first dying for their sins before He could accept His destiny as King of Kings. Later, Jesus accused them only of following Him because He fed them. We can have that attitude too, which is: “What’s in this for me? A free feed? Yes, I’ll be in that!”

God will shatter the small expectations of what His followers can do if they would learn to bring Him what they’ve already been given. Little is much when God is in it. This principle is found in Luke, Chapter 16: “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones.” When Christians are willing to offer their lives sacrificially to God, which requires them to give up their hold on whatever God has given them in terms of time, money, talents and so on, God will use these to create extraordinary things. Christians must never believe that their resources are too little to serve God. God delights in taking a humble, seemingly insignificant person and using him or her for His glory.

Now let's look at the 2nd miracle, which is called the Feeding of the 4,000 in the following chapter. Only the gospels of Matthew and Mark included these two miracles which were of the same kind. As Jesus had already fed 5,000 men plus women and children, healed their sick, what is the importance of recording a second feeding but with a smaller number? This feeding of the 4,000 took place in the region of Decapolis, east of the Lake of Galilee, and was a non-Jewish or Gentile area. Just prior to this feeding, the people of that region brought to Jesus their sick, blind and lame people to be healed. And praise God, Jesus healed them all!

Both miracles show the provision of the Lord and His love for the people He has created, both Jews and Gentiles. In both miracles, there were more pieces left over than they'd started with. How gracious and generous is our God! He provides in abundance!

Christians must bring their lives to God in a spirit of obedience and sacrifice, no matter how insignificant they may think their gifts or talents are. When you do so, expect God to do far beyond whatever can be imagined. Also, trust that God not only wants to meet the needs of His children, including yours, but He wants to lavish His children with spiritual blessings.

Elisha's feeding of 100 men foreshadowed Jesus' miracles of feeding many more people in the need of food. Jesus bypassed all human effort and did the impossible through God's Holy Spirit, for in Zachariah, Chapter 4, Verse 6, it says: "'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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