**Research on the Widow Woman and Elisha**

II Kings 4:1-7

“ELISHA, the second great prophet in the Kingdom of Israel, was Elijah’s successor. His work was accomplished during a period of continued apostasy in which, nevertheless, the

blessings of God’s grace were manifested to Israel. Elisha’s ministry began when Elijah, at divine direction, cast his mantle upon him. The prophet had been directed, “Elisha . . . shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room” (I Ki. 19:16). Elisha was “plowing

with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth” when the

call came. At once he left his work, his family and home, to minister to Elijah.

Five years or more of consecrated preparation for his calling were accorded him under the tutelage of Elijah (the latter years of Ahab’s reign, those of Ahaziah’s, and possibly the early years of Jehoram’s). He was known as that prophet “which poured water on the hands of Elijah.” Elisha also profited by the religious education afforded him

through association with the schools of the prophets. . .

Elisha labored for approximately fifty years under four of the kings of Israel: Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash. Like Elijah, he was the mouthpiece of God’s will, voicing the divine displeasure at the iniquitous conduct of secular rulers or bringing divine aid when these rulers turned to God for succor.

The many miracles of Elisha’s ministry, all of which took place after

he received the double portion of the Spirit, evidenced the grace, mercy,

and goodness of God, working blessings to men in the common walks of

life.

*At Jericho he purified the waters of a spring;*

*He multiplied the widow’s oil to the saving of her house;*

*He comforted the Shunammite woman with the promise of a son;*

*He raised her son from the dead;*

*He rendered poisoned pottage harmless;*

*With twenty loaves he fed a hundred men;*

*He healed Naaman the Syrian of leprosy, but punished his own servant Gehazi for abusing his master’s name;*

*He caused an iron axe head to float;*

*Elisha’s bones restored a dead man to life.*

*Elisha fulfilled two of the commissions given Elijah at Horeb:*

to appoint Hazael king of Syria and to anoint Jehu king of Israel (II Ki.8:7–13; 9:1–10). Through Hazael’s wars against Israel, Israel was weakened; through Jehu the house of Ahab was totally destroyed, the wickedness of Jezebel against God’s prophets was avenged, and Baal worship was exterminated in the Kingdom of Israel.

Elisha’s life evidenced and foreshadowed the grace and practical love

of humanity that so fully characterized the life of Jesus Christ” (Shotwell, 120).

II Kings 4:1-7

1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

“The widow of one of the members of the prophetic guilds is threatened with the seizure of her two sons by a creditor who intends to sell them as slaves. She appeals for help to

Elisha. He tells her to borrow all the vessels she can and to fill them with the oil she has at hand. Miraculously the oil continues to pour until all the vessels she can borrow are filled she sells this oil and is able to pay the creditor. The quantity of the oil was limited only by her faith in collecting empty vessels” (*IBD*, 3. 203).

“*there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets*—They were allowed to marry as well as the priests and Levites. Her husband, not enjoying the lucrative profits of business, had nothing but a professional income, which, in that irreligious age, would be precarious and very scanty, so that he was not in a condition to provide for his family”

“*the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen*—By the enactment of the law, a creditor was entitled to claim the person and children of the insolvent debtor, and compel them to serve him as bondmen till the year of jubilee should set them free” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.

“In her spiritual interpretation of the twenty-third Psalm, to be found in Science and Health ([p. 578](http://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=consciousness&book=tfccs.main.sh)), Mrs. Eddy uses the word "consciousness" for "house." When we are confronted with a human need, therefore, we may well ask ourselves: "What have we in the house? What are we entertaining in consciousness about this problem? Have we allowed thoughts of lack and limitation to enter our house, or consciousness, as did the widow who appealed to Elisha; or is our thought filled with the recognition of the abundant blessings which divine Love is forever pouring forth to meet the human need?...

“Let us be alert, therefore, to see that our house, or consciousness, is filled with spiritual ideas: ideas of abundance; ideas of love and brotherhood; ideas of wholeness and purity; positive, active, constructive spiritual ideas, comprising a rich treasury, a house full of good things, enough to meet our own need and to share with others. Then we shall exclaim with the Psalmist ([Ps. 23:6](http://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=Surely+goodness+and+mercy+shall+follow+me+all+the+days+of+my+life%3A+and+I+will+dwell+in+the+house+of+the+Lord+for+ever.&book=tfccs.main.hb.kj)), "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (“What hast thou in the house?” Dorothy Ereaut, CSS. Dec. 12, 1953).

**“Oil.**Consecration; charity; gentleness; prayer; heavenly inspiration” (SH 592:25)

3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, *even* empty vessels; borrow not a few.

“*borrow thee vessels*] Another sign of indigence. But the command to borrow many gave promise of the coming help” (Cambridge Bible Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

The door is a key feature in prayer. The purpose of God’s word is to teach us how to shut the door. “God’s word is heard when the senses are silent” (SH 89:12). The door represents the gateway to consciousness. We are to shut the door on any thoughts not coming from God.

SH 15:14-18

    In order to pray aright, we must enter into the

closet and **shut the door.** We must close the lips and

silence the material senses. In the quiet

sanctuary of earnest longings, we must

deny sin and plead God’s allness.

SH 392:24-27 Stand

Stand porter at the door of thought.

Admitting only such conclusions as you wish realized in

bodily results, you will control yourself harmoniously.

5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought *the vessels* to her; and she poured out.

6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, *There is* not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

“While there was a vessel to fill, there was oil sufficient; and it only ceased to flow when there was no vessel to receive it. This is a good emblem of the grace of God. While there is an empty, longing heart, there is a continual overflowing fountain of salvation. If we find in any place or at any time that the oil ceases to flow, it is because there are no empty vessels there, no souls hungering and thirsting for righteousness.”

*Adam Clarke Bible Commentary,* 1829 (Nashville: Abingdon Press)

“*The oil stayed*—that is, ceased to multiply; the benevolent object for which the miracle had been wrought having been accomplished” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

“*and the oil stayed;* it ran no longer, it was no more multiplied; there was no necessity of continuing the miracle: this oil may be an emblem of the grace that flows from the fullness of it in Christ, to which it is compared, which will be always flowing, as long as there is a vessel of salvation, or faith in any to receive it” (Gill’s Exposition of the Bible, www.biblehub.com).

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

“and he said, go, sell thy oil, and pay thy debt; what was thus miraculously produced was no doubt very good and excellent, and would fetch a good price; and she is therefore bid to turn it into money, and pay her debts with it; she was not to keep it all for her own use, and indulge to luxury with it, but first pay her just debt, as everyone ought to do that is able:

and live thou and thy children of the rest; so that it seems there was enough to pay her debt with it, rid her of her troubles, and somewhat remaining for the support of herself and children” (Gill’s Exposition of the Bible, www.biblehub.com).

**“What hast thou in the house?”**

Ethel Wasgatt Dennis

March 28, 1942 CSS

**In** Zarephath a widow, long ago,

Despite the seeming press of want and woe,

Shared with Elijah her own meager store

And saw it multiplied exceeding more.

Another widow sought Elisha's aid,

And now, no more despairing and afraid,

Her precious oil in borrowed vessels poured

And found God's providence her rich reward.

The rule of progress differs not today,

If thou wouldst prove Love's more abundant way.

Some precious thing thou hast which thou must share,

So to withhold it do not longer dare.

"What hast thou in the house?" A little cake,

A pot of oil? Oh, then for Love's dear sake

Share with another, and God's law will bless

And multiply it into loveliness.

Perhaps one understanding smile may show

Faith in a brother whose ascent seems slow,

One secret kindness where earth's burdens press,

One handclasp, eloquent with tenderness.

Each one must reap the harvest he has sown,

Since what we share is all we make our own;

Be this thy simple trust, thy joyous creed:

God's grace is still sufficient for man's need. 3 Like