

Norwood's Notes: Brief Summaries of Bible Stories

These "notes" are intended to provide a general overview of the basic stories of the Bible in the hope of building greater biblical knowledge and encouraging Bible reading and study. For more information, visit www.UjimaChurch.org

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25 - Highlights from 2 Kings 4-5, "Elisha the Prophet"

A prophet's widow pleaded with Elisha for help as a creditor was about to enslave her two children in payment of her debt (2Kgs 4). After learning that all she had of value in her home was a jar of oil, Elisha instructed her to borrow as many empty vessels as she could and begin filling them from the single jar of oil. The widow obeyed, along with her sons. As she poured out the oil, she found that the jar never emptied and she was able to continue to fill all of the vessels she had gathered from her neighbors, and only then did the oil cease to flow. She was able to sell the oil and pay her debts and then live off of the rest.

There was a wealthy woman who lived Shunem who would often host the prophet Elisha at her table. She and her husband made a small room on the flat roof of their home so that when Elisha came that way, he had a place to stay, for they honored him as a holy man. Grateful for this act of charity, Elisha asked his servant Gehazi what could be done in gratitude for the Shunammite woman. Gehazi answered, stating that she had no son and her husband was old. Calling his Shunammite hostess to the doorway, Elisha told her that in the following year she would have a son. About that time the following spring, she bore a son, just as the prophet had said. One day, when the child had grown old enough to go out with his father during the harvest, he was struck with great pain in his head. When he was carried back to his mother, who held him on her lap as he died. She placed the child's body in Elisha's room on the prophet's bed and shut the door behind her. She then quickly traveled to Mount Carmel to find Elisha, falling before him, and holding onto his feet, she cried out in distress. Elisha sent Gehazi ahead of him to place the prophet's staff on the child. Gehazi did so, but the child did not move. When Elisha came to the house and saw the dead child on his bed, he shut the door behind him and prayed to the Lord and stretched out on the child... mouth-to-mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands... and the child became warm. The prophet rose and walked to and fro around the house, finally returning to the child and stretching out upon him again. This time the little boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. He summoned Gehazi to bring the boy's mother to come and pick up her son from the bed. When she came into the room she fell again at the prophet's feet, bowing low to the ground, and then picked up her son who had been restored to life.

Afterward, during a great famine, Elisha traveled to Gilgal where a group of prophets gathered around him, and Gehazi prepared a large pot of boiling stew for them. One of the men gathered wild herbs, a wild vine, and gourds to put in the stew; but, without his knowledge, some of what he gathered was poisonous. As the prophets ate, they realized that the stew had poison in it, and they cried out, "*Oh man of God, there is death in the pot!*" (2Kgs 4:40 ESV). Elijah poured flour into the pot and then instructed them to go ahead and eat. The stew had become edible! Later, another man of God brought 20 barley loaves and fresh ears of grain to Elisha so that the prophets would have something to eat. But, Gehazi wondered how he could set such a small amount before the 100 men who were there. Elisha told him that the Lord said that they shall eat and even have leftovers! As Gehazi set the food before them, all of them ate and there was food left over just as the Lord had spoken through Elisha.

One day, the commander of the army of Syria, a man named Naaman, became ill with leprosy. His wife's servant was an Israelite girl who told her that there was a prophet in Samaria, the capital of Israel, who could cure Naaman. The king of Syria was so eager to see his commanding general be cured that he sent gifts of silver, gold, and clothing along with a letter requesting that the king of Israel heal Naaman. Distressed by this request, the king of Israel tore his clothes thinking that it was a ruse by the king of Syria who just wanted to start a fight. When Elisha heard of it, he had Naaman come to him. As the commander stood at the prophet's door, he was given a message by Gehazi to go wash in the Jordan River seven times and he would be healed. Naaman was angered by Elisha's response, and turned away in a rage. However, the commander's servants convinced him to do as the prophet had said. As Naaman dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, the leprosy left him, and his flesh became like that of a little child (2Kgs 5). He returned to Elisha and declared that he now knew that the only true God was the God in Israel! Naaman offered the gifts of silver and gold and clothing to the prophet, but Elisha refused to take them. However, when Naaman had traveled a distance on his way home, Gehazi caught up to him and sought to receive some of the gifts for himself by telling Naaman that Elisha had changed his mind and would accept some of the silver and some of the clothing to give to his fellow prophets. Thinking he had gotten away with this, Gehazi hid the what he had taken. Knowing Gehazi's deception, Elisha declared that Gehazi would have the disease from which Naaman had been healed. Gehazi departed from the prophet's presence, having been turned white with leprosy.