

# The Christian Arsenal

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## 2 KINGS 3:1-4:44

Last week we saw how Elijah went to heaven in a whirlwind and how Elisha was given a double portion of the spirit of Elijah so that he might carry on the work of the Lord.

Elijah is gone and Elisha is his successor. God always has a man. God always has someone who will be His spokesman to those around him. "Elijahs" come and go, but God always has a man. And now, Elisha is His man and God is in the process of affirming his ministry.

If we had had the time to cover all of **chapter 2**, we would have seen that God affirmed Elisha's ministry before the other **prophets** and also before the **people**. And in **chapter 3**, God affirms Elisha's ministry before the kings.

We're not going to read **chapter 3**, but I want to give you a brief summary of it and draw a couple of conclusions from it.

In **chapter 3** we see a king come on the scene to replace Ahaziah. If you'll remember from last week's lesson, Ahaziah was the son of Ahab and Jezebel and he fell through a lattice on his rooftop and injured himself.

We saw that he didn't seek healing from the God of Israel.

We saw that he sought healing from Baal-zebub...the "lord of the flies."

We saw that as a result of injury and as a result of his idolatry, Ahaziah died.

Well, we're introduced in **chapter 3** to a man named Jehoram. Jehoram was **also** the son of Ahab and Jezebel. And Jehoram **also** became king of Israel.

Look at

### **Verse 2...**

This is an interesting statement. He did some things right. But, he did other things wrong. He put away the sacred pillar of Baal, but **verse 3** tells us he clung to other false gods.

What **should** he have done? I mean, if he wanted to live a godly life, a life that was in total contrast to the life his mother and father and brother Ahaziah had lived, he should have destroyed **every idol in Israel**, shouldn't he?

Some folks want it both ways. Some folks think partial obedience is pleasing to God! But, I want to tell you...**partial obedience is really total disobedience.**

Have you ever been guilty of looking at someone else and saying, "Well, my sin isn't as bad as theirs! I mean, I know I don't do all that I should and I know I do some things I shouldn't, but look at old 'so and so' over there...I sure don't live like that!"

That's exactly what Jehoram did. He didn't want to be quite as bad as his mama and daddy, but he didn't want to be all that God wanted him to be either.

**Partial obedience is total disobedience!**

Listen, God **sees** our sin. God sees **all** our sin. We can't hide anything from God. God also keeps a record of our sin. There was a day when you and I had a record before God. **"...he did**

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*evil in the sight of the LORD, though not like his father and his mother...*” Ahab has a record before God. Jezebel has a record before God. And Jehoram has a record before God.

And one day, the books will be opened and the Bible tells us they will be judged according to the deeds written in those books. But, praise God...if we're saved...**the old account was settled long ago!** “My records clear today, Jesus washed my sins away...and the old account was settled long ago!

God not only **sees** all sin and **keeps a record** of all sin, God **knows when we keep on living in sin.**

Look at **verse 3... “he did not depart from it...”**

And I want you to know if we try to cover our sin, God still sees it.

If we try to ignore our sin, it still exists.

If we try to make light of it, it's still serious business before God.

The only thing we can really do about our sin is allow the cleansing power of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to wash it away!

The rest of **chapter 3** tells us how the king of Israel, Jehoram, and the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, along with the king of Edom allied themselves together to defeat the Moabites.

And in this chapter, we see God affirming Elisha's ministry before the kings. It was Elisha who told the kings of Israel and Judah and Edom how to prevail against the Moabites. And it was God who told Elisha!

And I just have to tell you how this was done. This story is just too good not to share with you...I don't know how many of you read your lesson this week. You really can't miss any of this, it's all SO good!!!

Elisha told the kings of Israel and Judah and Edom that they wouldn't see any rain, yet the valley would be filled with enough water for them to drink...along with their livestock.

And when the water came and filled up the valley, it was red! It looked so much like blood that the Moabites thought the kings who had allied themselves together against him had somehow gotten into a battle amongst themselves and had fought together and killed each other and all they had to do was go and gather the spoil from their camp.

Well, when they entered into the camp of Israel, the Jews were ready for them and they killed the Moabites. They destroyed their cities. They stopped up their springs and cut down all their trees.

When the king of Moab saw there was no chance for them to win, he took his oldest son...the one who was to reign over the Moabites after his death, and he offered him as a burnt offering on the wall.

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I wish we could cover this chapter in depth because there are some great lessons in this passage, but I want in the time we have left to look at **chapter 4**.

In **chapter 4**, we see God continuing to affirm Elisha's ministry. And He does this by empowering Elisha to perform several miracles...in fact there are **five miracles** in this one chapter.

The first miracle is the one we see in

## **Verses 1-7...**

This sounds familiar to us because Elijah performed a similar miracle back in **1 Kings**. Here was a woman who had lost her husband...and not only had she lost her husband, but her husband left her with great debt, debt she could not pay...and if that weren't bad enough, her creditor was going to come and take her sons away to be slaves.

### **I would say the situation was desperate, wouldn't you?**

So, what did Elisha tell this little widow lady to do? He told her to go and borrow vessels for herself...empty vessels...a lot of empty vessels. Here was a little lady already in debt so much she couldn't pay her debt, and Elisha told her to go and borrow more.

Well, she did. And she and her sons went in and shut the door just as Elisha told her to do and guess what? All the vessels became full of oil. And when every one of the vessels were full, guess what? The oil stopped!

And Elisha told her to go and sell the oil so she could pay her debt and not only that, but there was enough left over that they could live on.

What does this miracle mean to you and me today? Does it mean that you and I can go out and borrow big barrels and God's going to fill them with oil (or gas) and we can sell it all and make a profit and quit work and live on it?

Well, I believe there are some deeper lessons than that for us in this passage:

The first thing I want us to think about is that the lady was told to go and gather **empty** vessels. See, God cannot fill a pot that's already full, can He?

How many times, I wonder, does God desire to pour out His blessings upon us and He can't because our hands are already full?

When Jesus gave His parable of the sower and the seed He said, "When the seed fell upon thorny ground, the thorns choked the seed out" and He said this meant that the heart can become so full of the worries of this world and the heart can become so enthralled with the riches of this world that the seed of the Word of God has no room to do its work.

Then, Elisha told this little lady that after she had gathered all the empty vessels that she was to go and shut the door behind her. It's so tempting to share every blessing that God gives us...**and I believe God wants you and me to share a lot of His blessings.**

But, I also believe there are times when the Lord wants to speak a word to me and it's just to be kept between Him and me. I heard Dr. McGee say this a long, long time ago. Many times God just wants us to know His presence and His peace and His grace and His blessing in a very personal way that we don't need to tell others about.

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**And don't worry, when those times come...you'll know it! You'll have a peace about sharing...and you'll have a burden not to share!**

Another thing. Elisha told her to pour. The lady didn't have but one jar of oil...yet, before her were many vessels that had been borrowed from her neighbors and when she began to pour...they all became full...until she ran out of vessels!

And I believe this teaches you and me that **me must obey God even when it doesn't make sense**. I believe this teaches you and me that **we must exercise faith even when our faith is small**.

When desperate situations arise in our lives, we must

- be willing to **cast our cares upon God...**
- be willing to **obey His Word...**
- be willing to **empty ourselves to make room for His blessing...**
- be willing to **get alone with God...**
- be willing to **exercise faith...**

Let's look at a second miracle Elisha performed...and I'm going to summarize some of this...

**Verses 8-17** tell us that Elisha went over into Shunem and there he met up with a prominent woman who extended hospitality to him. And we know from this text that she had enough spiritual depth to know that Elisha was a holy man.

She even persuaded her husband to build him a little room so that when he was in the area he could stop in and stay with them.

Well, Elisha wanted to repay her in some way, and after questioning the lady Elisha's servant Gehazi concluded that she had no son and her husband was old. So, with that information under his belt, Elisha decided he would tell her she would bear a son at the same time the very next year.

**And she did. But something happened.**

Verses 18-26...

I believe the greatest heartache of a parent is to lose a child. Some of you have lost children. Some of you have lost them while they were still infants...maybe even before they were born. Some of you have lost grown children.

And it's very difficult. Our missionary friends are still grieving and will probably grieve for years and years over the death of their son. My friend is still consumed with grief over the death of her son last summer.

The only good thing I can think of when a child dies is that God can use the grieving parents to minister to others who are grieving. No one can comfort another like those who have gone through like experiences.

But, death comes very suddenly and unexpectedly sometimes. This boy seemed to be fine one minute and was complaining of his head hurting and then he died.

I believe we learn from this passage that **death is no respecter of persons**.

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We don't ever expect to bury our children. We know that death comes to the elderly. But death also comes to those who are young. Death isn't impressed with how old we are or how young we are.

Another thing we can learn from this passage is that **all the love we have toward our loved ones cannot stop death from coming.**

**Example:** Two graves of little brothers buried next to each other. "If love could have saved you you would not have died."

You know this couple loved their little boys.

You know this Shunammite couple loved their boy...

I think of our friends and I know how much they loved their son. I think of another friend and I know how much she loved her son. I think of how my husband and I had prepared for the birth of our first little boy and I know how much we loved him...but **all the love in the world cannot stop death from coming.**

Another thing we can learn from death is that **we can be prepared for it.** We don't have to cross Jordan alone. We can die safe in the arms of Jesus!

Even at best...life is short. Even if we live to be old, life is still short. My husband has such a witty way with words sometimes and he said something like this the other day... "Life is like an assembly line. We roll along on the belt and then at the end we fall off."

**James said life is a vapor. And the older we get, the shorter life is.**

Let's get back to this passage. What do we see in this Shunnamite woman that we long to have in our own life? I see her faith. Look at **verse 23**...and then look at **verse 26**... **I believe we see great faith in these two verses.**

Our pastor made a statement when he preached this passage of Scripture several years ago...  
"Real faith doesn't just work when things are going well.  
Real faith affirms that it **is** well when things don't appear to be."

That's faith! Most of us don't really learn the deep things of God when we're on the mountaintop. We learn the deep things of God when we're in the valleys of life.

And our **faith** is our greatest source of comfort when someone close to us dies. But, another source of comfort is **family**.

**Verse 22**... "And she called to her husband..."

I don't have much family. But, I want you to know that when something sad happens, the little family I have are oh so important.

I'll never forget being (and I'm so glad God let me be there) in the room with my husband's mom when she died. There was my husband and his three brothers and myself. And it was a sweet thing to see God just gently take this dear old saint home to be with Him.

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Not only is our faith a great comfort to us...and our family a great comfort to us...Another source of comfort to us are our **Christian friends**. She said, ***“that I may run to the man of God...”***

I heard on pastor say that for years he had said that if anything ever happened in his family he didn't want a lot of people around. He was not a real “people person” like our pastor is.

But, he said when his son died, and all the people from their church kept coming and coming and coming...it was such a comfort to them just to be touched and held and embraced by folks who loved him and Kaye and were hurting with them.

Elisha told Gehazi to ask the Shunnamite if it was well with her and if it was well with her husband and if it was well with her child. And she said, “It is well.”

I looked at this verse a long time this week. And I wondered if my son were lying at home dead if I would be able to say “It is well.”

I believe we see another picture and proof of this lady's great faith. Her child was dead, but it is well. And I believe she knew that God could use Elisha to bring him back to life, but even if he didn't it would still be well. Jesus does all things well.

I hope I learn that one of these days.

## ***Having said that, let's look at***

Verse 28...

I love the honesty of God's Word. Here was a woman of great faith...yet she still had questions. **And the man of God understood and God understood. And God understands when you and I ask questions.**

Sometimes He answers them immediately, but most of the time He answers them gradually. Sometimes we must wait until we get to heaven before we get the answers we want. Someone who had undergone great sadness and tragedy wrote a song once and the chorus goes like this...

***“We'll talk it over in the by and by.  
We'll talk it over my Lord and I.  
I'll ask the reasons. He'll tell me why,  
when we talk it over in the by and by.”***

Well, Elisha sent Gehazi to lay his staff on the lad's face. Why? I have no idea. But, I'm in good company. Matthew Henry commented on this verse:

***“It is difficult to determine what the prophet meant by sending Gehazi.”***

One commentator said Elisha was trying to build Gehazi's faith. I don't know...that just doesn't sound right to me...

For whatever reason, the boy didn't live again until **Elisha** himself came.

Verse 32-37...

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Why did the boy live when Elisha ministered to him and didn't live when Gehazi ministered to him?

Well, I believe one reason and probably the most important reason is that Gehazi thought the power of God was in the staff he held.

**But, Elisha knew the power of God was released through prayer.**

**Elisha prayed for the boy to live. Gehazi didn't.**

Another thing we learn from this passage of Scripture is that **the power of life and death are in the hands of God.** The book of *Ecclesiastes* says **"there is a time to be born and there is a time to die."**

The psalmist says, **"Our times are in God's hands."** I don't believe our birth is an accident nor do I believe our death will be. He allowed this boy to be brought back to life

Does God raise people from the dead today? I don't know. I've heard stories of God doing this in the Far East...in China, for instance. God can do anything He wants to do.

I remember when Kay Arthur lost her father many years ago. Kay was certain God was going to raise him up. She felt so sure that he wasn't going to die and even if he drew his last breath that he would be brought back...but it didn't happen.

And you know...we can't argue with God. I believe He understands when we question Him. I believe He doesn't get all upset with us when we ask Him why...

**But, at the same time we just have to understand that He does all things well.** He knows the end from the beginning and everything in between.

The last thing I want us to think about is the fact that **death for the child of God is never the end of the story.**

If Jesus doesn't come first, we're **all** going to die. And we're all closer to death today than we were yesterday! **And the only thing you and I can do is to make absolutely certain that we're ready to meet Jesus.**

**And I pray that you and I will do just that!**

Remember what's going on here. Remember that God is authenticating Elisha's ministry by these miracles. There are two more miracles in this chapter that we'll not be able to see today.

And next week, we'll see the miracle of the healing of Naaman and even more miracles that Elisha wrought by the hand of the Lord