

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES

I love and admire Elisha. As the years have rolled by, I have developed an affinity for the godly people of the Bible I have read about. They have become my friends. As a matter of fact, they have become some of my best friends because of the time spent in study of their lives through the Word of God.

We have a tendency to place Elisha in the shadow of the great Elijah. He was definitely subservient to Elijah while the mighty man of God walked upon this earth in rolling thunder, but do not think less of him. You will find twice the number of miracles in his life recorded when compared to Elijah. This was not because he requested for twice as many. In II Kings 2:9 the scripture reads, *"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."* Some have mistakenly considered his request as an ego driven desire to out-perform his mentor, however, it was a sincere request to be like a son who receives the double portion of the oldest child's inheritance. According to the custom, two thirds (double portion) of a man's inheritance went to the oldest son while the one third remaining goes to the younger siblings. So he was only requesting a portion of the spiritual power of the great man of God whom he was following. Elisha's humility is further illustrated by this phrase, *"...Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah"* (II Kings 3:11b). It was said of John the Baptist, *"And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias (Elijah), to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord"* (Luke 1:17). John the Baptist's ministry was a ministry of judgment to prepare the people for the healing ministry of Jesus. *"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved"* (John 3:17). F. W. Krummacher compared the days of Elisha to the healing ministry of Jesus. He said, *"A similar period, transcendently peaceful and benign, smiled upon Israel when Elisha appeared."* He further called it *"...that happy, enlightened period...."* In II Kings 2:11-22 we witness the beginning of Elisha's ministry. He began by using the fallen mantle (the covering robe of the mighty prophet) to part the waters, but then we see him go to the poisoned waters of Jericho, surrounded by the barren land as a result of the curse from

Elijah's ministry. Elisha ordered salt to be thrown into the waters and we read, *"So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake"* (II Kings 2:22). We never read again of Elisha borrowing his predecessor's mantle. He wears his own robe of healing power for the rest of his days. Even after his death we read, *"And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet"* (II Kings 13:21). There was more healing life in the bones of the deceased Elisha than in many of the living today!

Much could be said about the dynamic ministry of Elisha, but today I want to focus our attention on three identical phrases found in II Kings 4: 8, 11 and 18: *"...it fell on a day..."* What a difference a day makes! Only three times is this phrase mentioned in all of Scripture and all three times is within the circumference of eleven verses in II Kings 4! Let's investigate these three places and see what God may be saying to us.

I. A Difference When the Day Brings a Rendezvous with Destiny

We see in II Kings 4:8-10:

A. A Personal Need

The woman of Shunem was called a "great" woman (II Kings 4:8). This word means noble or wealthy. Yet we shall see later in our story this was a woman who also had a great need. Do you have a need that you don't have liberty to discuss with just anybody and everybody? God knows your desires and wants to be more than the God referred to in Robert Browning's poem, "God's in His heaven—All's right with the world!" He wants to be known as He is known in Psalm 46:1, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*

B. A Prophet's Necessity

It appears from our text that Elisha went by this house often in his travels, but has nowhere to stay (II Kings 4:9). The woman brings the prophet's need to the attention of her husband. Jesus said, *"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward"* (Matthew 10:41). When we recognize our own personal needs, it is most advantageous to attend to the needs of another. *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another"* (Romans 12:10). The Lord takes care of those who take care of others.

C. A Place Provided

When this lady and her husband determined to build the original prophet's chamber equipped with a bed, a table, a stool and a candlestick, they did not know how greatly rewarded they were going to be (II Kings 4:10). Such an ordinary room with ordinary fixtures was soon to become the perfect place for phenomenon. It is the birthplace of destiny!

Secondly, we see:

II. A Difference When the Day Brings the Ship Sailing In

We observe in II Kings 4: 11-17:

A. A Rest Received

The weary worn prophet needed a place to rest. This Shunammite and her husband found a need and filled it (II Kings 4:11). As Elisha lay there in his new bedroom, God moved upon his heart to do something for the woman. It is in the peaceful resting times that God often speaks to us. *"When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches"* (Psalm 63:6).

B. A Reciprocation Offered

Elisha asks the lady what she would want. It has been suggested since Elisha was admired by the king, that the Shunammite could suggest something she wanted from him, but she confidently said, *"...I dwell among mine own people"* (II Kings 4:13c), meaning, I am satisfied; I don't need nor do I want anything the king might offer me.

C. A Revived Hope

II Kings 4: 16-17, the Shunammite is promised a boy! To use an old proverbial expression, "Her ship is coming in!" After all these years of waiting, longing and wanting, "it fell on a day." The day has finally come!

Thirdly we see:

III. A Difference When God Turns the Trial into Triumph.

We are brought into this crucible that turns into death that culminates in resurrection in II Kings 4: 18-37:

A. The Test

In II Kings 4:18-22 the greatest test this family has ever known is upon them. The Bible tells us, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you"* (I Peter 4:12).

B. The Trust

In II Kings 4:23-30 there are four statements made by the Shunammite woman that speaks of her undying trust in the Lord in the moment of crisis, *"It shall be well"* (II Kings 4:23). *"It is well"* (II Kings 4:26). *"Do not deceive me"* (II Kings 4:28). *"I will not leave thee"* (II Kings 4:30).

C. The Turnaround

II Kings 4:31-37 reminds us that God's works are not limited to man's imagination. *"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"* (Ephesians 3:20). The prophet's staff is placed on the dead body of the boy, but he is not revived. This is an illustration that God does not superstitiously run His power through objects or things. God does not bless icons. God blesses people! It is when the man of God arrives on the scene that things change. Even today God is looking for surrendered vessels through which He will show His power and might.

After seven sneezes, the boy is fully alive! What a turnaround and what an encouragement to all of us that the Lord God of Elijah and Elisha is still ready to turn all of our trials into triumphs.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.