

## THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN

### INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **2Kings 4:8-37**. From Roy H. Enoch (07-11-1993).
- B. Great lessons can be learned from Bible people who are only briefly mentioned (Rom. 15:4).
  - 1. This is the seventh of the seventeen stories we are told about Elisha.
  - 2. We do not know the name of this generous woman from Shunem.
  - 3. Her husband seems to be older and is mentioned as being in agreement w/her requests.
  - 4. She is called "great" (KJV), "a notable woman" (NKJ), and "well-to-do" (NIV).
    - a. This is usually understood to mean that she was a wealthy and influential woman.
    - b. But, as this story shows, she was great in other ways: in her faith, humility, wisdom, perception and service.
- C. The name of this "notable woman" is not given, but she is identified as living in Shunem.
  - 1. Shunem was a village on the NE edge of the fertile valley called Jezreel in the OT or Esdraelon in the NT.
  - 2. It was in the territory of Issachar about 9mi. east of Megiddo on the slope of Mt. Moreh.
  - 3. It was on the road from Nazareth than led from Shunem across the Plain of Esdraelon on to Jerusalem.
  - 4. This valley was the largest level area in Palestine and the location of many great battles.
    - a. Saul and Jonathan had been killed here.
    - b. Israel had fought many battles here.
    - c. In the book of Revelation the great epic struggle is pictured as the battle of Armageddon (Mount Megiddo) named after the town on a small mountain or hill on the south side of the valley (16:16).
- E. We want to study the brief account of the great faith of this godly woman to learn how we may be more faithful as we live before God.

### I. SHE WAS PERCEPTIVE OF THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.

- A. See 2Kgs. 4:8-10.
- B. When Elisha passed through Shunem "she persuaded him to eat some food."
  - 1. She seemed to be looking for an opportunity to help someone.
  - 2. She not only offered food, but "persuaded" or "urged."
  - 3. He felt comfortable w/her hospitality and "as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food" (4:8).
  - 4. A genuinely benevolent person enjoys the opportunity to serve.
- C. She also perceived that he was a godly man (4:9).
  - 1. She may have heard of Elijah and Elisha, his disciple.
  - 2. She may have known of some of his miracles.
- D. She sees the need for a more permanent arrangement for his needs (4:10).
  - 1. They used the roof much as we would use a deck, and the Law of Moses required that they have a railing around it and it would also have an outside stairway (Deut. 22:8).
  - 2. She proposed that they build a room "on the wall" or next to the edge of the roof.
  - 3. She furnished it for his needs w/a bed, table, chair and lampstand.

### II. ELISHA WAS APPRECIATIVE AND CONCERNED ABOUT HOW HE COULD HELP HER.

- A. He has his servant, Gehazi, call the woman (2Kgs. 4:12,13).
  - 1. Elisha may have had several benefits in mind.
    - a. He might request of the king a job or position.
    - b. He might get relief from an oppressor from the commander of the army.
    - c. He might get recognition or honor for her.

- d. But she said that she did not need anything.
- 2. Elisha then asks Gehazi what they could do for her (2Kgs. 4:14).
  - a. Every God-loving woman in Israel considered it her sacred duty to have a son.
  - b. Yet her husband was old and she had no hope.
  - c. So he told Gehazi to call her (4:15,16).
  - d. She seemed afraid to get her hopes up for something that she desired so much.
  - e. But the next year she had the son as the prophet promised.
  - f. We can imagine the joy and affection that she had for this son that she had received by the promise of the prophet of God that she had helped.

### III. OFTEN BLESSINGS ARE ALSO THE SOURCE OF TRIALS AND SORROW.

- A. Several years later the son tested her faith. (8th story of Elijah.)
  - 1. He went out to his father and the reapers (2Kgs. 4:18-20).
    - a. The time of wheat harvest is hot weather.
    - b. The very young and very old are most susceptible to sunstroke and heat exhaustion.
    - c. He was taken to his mother.
  - 2. She does not tell his father that the child is dead.
    - a. We wonder why.
    - b. She takes the child up to the prophet's room and lays him on the prophet's bed.
    - c. She then calls to her husband and asks him to send one of the young men and a donkey that she may go to the prophet and return.
    - d. She seems to know that Elisha is on Mt. Carmel, 15 miles to the northwest.
    - e. She tells the servant to hurry (4:24).
- B. Elisha does not know why she is in grief (2Kgs. 4:25-27).
  - 1. Her answer to the question of how is it with you, your husband and your child, "It is well." gives us the theme of the beautiful song of faith, IT IS WELL W/ MY SOUL.
  - 2. Although the Lord had not revealed the reason of her distress, Elisha could sense her deep grief.
  - 3. She bowed and held Elisha by the feet, and Gehazi started to push her away.
  - 4. But she then revealed that something had happened to her son (4:28).
- C. Elisha sends Gehazi on ahead w/his staff to lay it upon the face of the child.
  - 1. We do not know why this was done.
    - a. It may have been to give the mother a sense of doing something while they were getting there.
    - b. It may have been to give Gehazi something to do.
    - c. It may have been to indicate that the power of God was through the prophet himself.
  - 2. The Shunammite vows to stay and go w/ the prophet.
  - 3. Gehazi meets them to report that, "The child is not awakened."
  - 4. When they got to the house, they found the child "lying dead on his bed" (4:32).
    - a. Some claim that the child was only unconscious.
    - b. This shows their rejection of the Scriptures since it plainly says that he was dead.
  - 5. Elisha acts similarly to Elijah when raising the son of the widow of Zarephath (1Kgs. 17:21; 2Kgs. 4:33-35).
    - a. Many miracles seemed to have been worked in private.
    - b. There is no reason to suggest that this may have been a form of artificial respiration (except for a lack of faith in God and His word.)
- D. Elisha restores her son to her (2Kgs. 4:36,37).
  - 1. Again, Elisha has his servant call the woman.
  - 2. The woman shows proper respect/gratitude by falling at his feet; bowing to the ground.

- E. One more incident is given in the life of this godly woman (2Kgs. 8:1-6).
  - 1. Later, when a famine was spreading in the direction of the rich grain country of Shunem, Elisha warns her to go to the land of the Philistines, "for the Lord has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years" (8:1).
    - a. She does not hesitate to follow the instruction of the prophet.
    - b. She seems to have complete faith in what he says.
  - 2. There is no mention of the father at this time, so he may have already died.
  - 3. When she returns seven years later, her property has been claimed by another. She went in person to King Jehoram to plead her case.
  - 4. At that moment the king was talking with Gehazi (2Kgs. 8:4-6).
    - a. Her faith in following the word of the prophet of the Lord is gain rewarded.
    - b. We will always be blessed in some way when we put God's will first in our lives.
- F. There are many lessons of faith and concern for others in this Shunammite woman.
  - 1. She wanted to help people: it was not for show or glory.
  - 2. She looked for other ways to help after feeding him.
  - 3. She did not want recognition or glory for what she had done.
  - 4. She did not complain or blame God for misfortune.
  - 5. She continue to have faith in God and His prophet.
  - 6. She did as she was told by the prophet.
  - 7. She was thankful and showed respect.

#### **CONCLUSION.**

- A. We need to learn lessons from godly Bible characters.
- B. We need to follow their examples.