

Elisha ~ Part 10

In my last post, we continued to explore the ministry of **Elisha** by looking at **2 Kings 4:29-37** where we learned about a **Second Great Miracle** in the life of this **Great Woman** in **2 Kings 4:29-37**. In this post, we learn about **Grace Removes A Curse** in **2 Kings 4:38-41**.

Grace Removes A Curse

³⁸ Elisha went back to Gilgal. At the time, there was a famine in the land. The guild prophets were sitting before him, and he said to his servant, 'Put the big pot on the fire, and boil some soup for the prophets.' ³⁹ One of them went out to the field to gather vegetables and came upon a wild vine, from which he filled the front of his cloak with wild squash. On returning, he cut them up and put them into the stew; they didn't know what they were. ⁴⁰ Then they poured it out for the men to eat; but on tasting it, they cried, 'Man of God! There's death in that pot!' And they couldn't eat it. ⁴¹ But he said, 'Bring some flour. He threw it in the pot, then said, 'Pour it out for the people to eat.' This time there was nothing harmful in the pot.' ~ 2 Kings 4:38-41 (CJB)

This story, along with one we will look at next, gives a glimpse into the life of the bands of **guild prophets** (students) and how God provides for them in times of need. The prophets' way of life, at least on some occasions, demanded that they forage for their food. They partly supported themselves by such foraging and partly by gifts from pious Israelites.

Elisha is the leader of the band of students at **Gilgal** near **Jericho**, where they gather before him for instruction, encouragement, and direction. The **famine** probably refers to the seven-year famine described in a later encounter with the **Shunammite** woman (8:1-6). **Elisha** assumes responsibility for the preparation of the meal, asking **Geichazi** his servant to make a stew for the men.

Vegetables were scarce, so some of the students went looking in the fields for herbs they could add to the stew. The student who came with a cloak filled with gourds was not knowledgeable about such matters but just brought whatever looked edible. Nobody knew what these gourds were!

The toxic ingredient is generally considered the yellow gourds are known as **colocynths**, popularly referred to today as apples of Sodom. They can be fatal. ¹

What were the evidences that there was poison in the pot? The bitter taste of the stew was perhaps the first clue, and the men probably suffered stomach pains and nausea. There had been death in the water at Jericho (2:19-22), and now there was death in the pot at **Gilgal**. Remember, this was a time of famine and food was scarce. **Elisha** dropped some flour into the pot, and the Lord removed the poison from the stew.

The flour itself did not make the noxious stew edible, but a miraculous cure was accomplished through the flour. Like **Eliyahu**, **Elisha** used flour to demonstrate the concern of God for man. Flour was believed to possess magical power able to remove evil magic. It is often used in magical incantations and rituals in the ancient Near East, but not quite in this way. Sometimes a flour paste is used to make a figurine that is then used in a magical ritual. Other times the flour is sprinkled in a circle around something that the ritual is to be performed on. As is often the case, **Elisha** is using procedures that would have some familiarity with the world of magic, but never quite in a typical way or with the ritualistic elements. ²

Elisha neutralized the poison with another miraculous deed. The lesson was that God's power could protect His people from careless dangers even in a severe famine.

¹ The IVP Bible Background Commentary – Old Testament.

² Ibid.

In my next post, we continue to explore the life of **Elisha**. In this post, we learn that **Grace Satisfies the Hungry** in **2 Kings 4:42-44**.