

10635

ELISHA 1980

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study #5 Exhortation

Elisha's Significant Miracles (The Widow's Flow of Oil)

Reading: 2 Kings 4:1-7

My beloved b&s in our Lord Jesus Christ

Well, we did very briefly, sketch the character of Elisha, b&s, on last Tuesday evening, and as we were caused to say on that occasion, that sketch is best seen, when it is sketched against the background and the contrast of the character of Elijah. That's the best way to do it, because that's how the Word of God does it, sets the one against the other, so we might see them as men of contrast.

Let me say at the outset, b&s, that even though we believe that in the portrayal of the work which was to come later, Elijah of course, was to prefigure John the Baptist, and Elisha the Lord Jesus Christ. If we were to discriminate between the two men as to their greatness, I feel that Elijah must take precedence over Elisha. I believe there are reasons for that, but nonetheless, in the story we have before us, there's no doubt about this, that it's Elisha that prefigures the work for us, of the greater of all men, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we had those two men, very vividly set one against the other, the rough and the austere and stern prophet from Gilead, who stood aloof from mankind, lived on his own quite often, and brought down fire from heaven upon a very disobedient Israel.

And on the other hand, of course, the more sociable, amicable and passionate Elisha, from the idyllic and wonderful conditions that existed at Abel-melholah, and be brought to Israel to bear, the still small voice upon the ears of the remnant that was left, b&s, and was able to rise up on that occasion, the schools of the prophets, and they multiplied to such an extent, that they had to get new buildings to house them, as they came together to study the Word of God. And what we want to do today, is to take several of the miracles of Elisha, to show how that his miracles, 16 in number, just twice those of Elijah, having received a double portion, to indicate of course, that he was the leader of the nation on that occasion, that his miracles, b&s, had a far more significant content than did the miracles of Elijah. As a matter of fact, I don't believe there is in the whole record of the Old Testament scriptures, a life in this regard, of the symbolic content of miracles, that so much typifies the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There's just not another life in the record like this, and you've only got to look at the broad sweep of those miracles to see the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if you were to add an

'amen' to Basil's prayer that opened this meeting, well, then you wouldn't have done that hypocritically, you would have been following very carefully, and you would have heard in Basil's words, 'that broad sweep of miracle in which those words portrayed to us very clearly, without any need of exposition, the work of our Lord Jesus Christ'. He did heal lepers, He did raise the dead, He did cures, and He did wonders, b&s, all of which had a wonderful spiritual content, and meaning for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, who could see beyond the wonder-working, to the wonderful principles which were contained in those miracles.

You take for example, the first miracle which Elisha performs is in the city of Jericho. And he came into Israel to lift a curse from a Gentile city, and then made his way up to Beth-el, the house of God, and was rejected by the Jewish people. Now how about that, for following the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ, who when He began his last descent to Jerusalem, He started at the city of Jericho, stopped in his tracks, and commanded that blind Bartemeus, be called to His feet. He didn't go across to the blind man, which of course, everyone else would have done under those same circumstances, far easier for one to walk to a blind man than a blind man to come to you. But Jesus didn't do that, He stopped in his tracks and He commanded the Jews that they should call blind Bartemeus at Jericho. And of course, Bartemeus, the son of Timeus, as Mark tells us by interpetation, the son of the unclean, a blind man in Jericho. Son of the unclean, and Jesus stood and had him called, and 'he followed Him in the way', and there, beginning His ascent to Jerusalem for the last time, the Lord commenced that ascent by doing a wonderful thing, and performing a miracle and lifting the curse from that man at Jericho, and He went up to the 'house of God' and was rejected by His own people. Now Elisha went to Beth-el, of course, and Jesus went to Jerusalem; but in a very real sense, they both went to the house of God and they found among the people there, a rejection that they didn't find in Jericho. And so there was a wonderful similarity in those two miracles.

Take the last one that Elisha performed; dead, when he laid in his tomb, and in the hurry to get away from the marauding bands of the Moabites, people burying another man, laid him down quickly into Elisha's tomb, and he touched Elisha's bones and sprang into life. There was life in that dead man, b&s, the life of God, and it was as if were, as if Yahweh was pointing out to Israel, that although his mortal body and his remains were dead, and he had no conscious existence, there was a living principle in Elisha that should have been reviving that nation. How significant was that of the Lord Jesus Christ? who died and rose again that we might have life and have it more abundantly. So there was even in that miracle, b&s, a wonderful prefiguring of the resurrection that would follow the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. What we want to do therefore, is to have a look at some of these significant miracles, and to see the wonderful spiritual content of them, and what we can learn from them.

You take 2 Kings chapter 4 verses 1 to 7 which was read for us this evening. The widow woman, a certain woman the record calls her, and you've got to think very carefully about her circumstances. She's a widow woman, has two sons, who because they cannot meet their responsibilities are in captivity. Not very difficult to see what she prefigures is it? Here is a widow woman who was related or married to one of the sons

of the prophets, now she's in desperate straits, cannot meet her responsibilities and her two sons are in captivity. That's Israel! Israel, b&s, was related to Yahweh, Israel, b&s, suffered widowhood, and Yahweh took them up and saved them from that widowhood, as Isaiah 54 tells us, and the two houses of Israel went into captivity because they couldn't meet their responsibilities. And there is in that parable and that miracle a very wonderful story, only for Israel to see, if only they could see it! And there is also in the story, b&s, a very powerful personal exhortation; one of the most powerful personal exhortations in the record of Elisha's life, and that's no exaggeration as I will show you in a minute, a powerful personal lesson, which would do away with about 60 or 70% of our ecclesial problems, if it was put into practice. It would absolutely get rid of them, if this lesson was put into practice.

Now she's a widow woman. Now we know of course, what the scriptures say about widows; we know that Exodus chapter 22 and verse 22, talks about the need of widows in the ecclesia in Israel, how that Yahweh demanded that they be cared for. They were to participate in the tithes of Israel says the 14th chapter of Deuteronomy, and in the 24th chapter of Deuteronomy, Israel were commanded to leave the corners of their fields, that the widow also might come in with the poor and the stranger and to glean what was left. There are many references, b&s, to the widows; Psalm 68 speaks about Yahweh as being a father to the fatherless, and a help to the widows, and wherever we go in the Word of God, we find that the widow becomes the very epitome of absolute and utter dependence upon God. Not like today, you know you read about the customs of the times, and we laugh sometimes about the marriage relationships that are taken up, we don't understand the social customs of the times, b&s. In those days, a woman was a terribly dependent creature; at the bible school, John Ullman talked about the marriage of David and Abigail, and how she readily accepted that, and I believe, not only for the reasons that John pointed out, but also because she would have been a terribly dependent woman as they were in those days, despite Nabal's wealth. She had no guarantee of that, being a woman, and David gave her protection; and when a man multiplied wives, b&s, it wouldn't have been for the reasons that they'd multiply them today. They weren't men like that, that wouldn't have been the reason at all! and many of those wives would have been taken in, for no other reason, some of them, than to offer them the shelter and protection that a woman so desperately needed. You have only to look at the Psalms and look at the book of Leviticus and some of the things that it says about the woman's position and need in the ecclesia, and the book of Isaiah, where women grab hold of the skirt of one man saying, 'we'll all go with you', because men were taken away from the earth because of disobedience and lost their lives in war and in sieges and the women were desperate! Not like today when you can get out and get yourself a job, have your separate bank balance, go your separate way, have an equal voice with your husband, write your own cheques, do your own thing, buy your own stuff, to heck with your husband! That's the rule today, b&s, but it wasn't in those days, and that woman was in need, in real need, hence you get that emphasis placed upon the need of the widows as far as God is concerned; and in order that we might have it in the absolute extreme, we have that parable of the widow woman who went to the unjust judge, and by her persistence, was able to procure what she looked for. And the Lord Jesus Christ in that parable, taking the absolute extreme, of a man who was

aloof who was completely without feeling, who was untouched by humanity in any way, shape or form, and on the other end of the scale, the creature who was completely and utterly dependent upon others. The Lord wouldn't have selected the figure of the widow, b&s, if a figure had not been as I described it. Make no mistake about that! So here is a woman, a woman in desperate circumstances, and Elisha knows that. And the reason I've painted her like that, b&s, is because when I bring this moral point out, I want to leave nobody in this room, including yours truly, with any excuse whatever to miss the tremendous exhortation that's in this parable. Because there's not one of us, that was in her need! No one here has got any need like that, and that's what I believe, she's in that record for, to teach us that lesson!

Now look what Elisha said to her in verse 2, 'Elisha said unto her, what shall I do for thee?' Now, that's an interesting question, b&s, and that's a question I suppose, that everyone who ask of anybody coming to them who was in trouble. You imagine, for example, anybody comes to you and asks, 'Can I have five minutes of your time? Yes, of course, you can, come around and have a talk one night and a cup of coffee, and sit down. And you say, 'what can I do for you?' Well, you never fail to get an answer to that question, and the whole night is given over to a whole series of things that you can do for them. But you know what Elisha did, he didn't wait for a reply; he never gave that woman a chance to say what he could do for her. He was wiser than what we are, like the Lord Jesus Christ, who acted like this on numerous occasions; you give flesh an opportunity to ask you, what you can do for them, or what the ecclesia can do for them, and they'll keep you there all day, all night and all the next day, telling you what you can do for them. And this is what's the trouble, b&s, that we feel the ecclesia and the world and our brethren and sisters owe us something. They owe us nothing! We're all in God's debt, and Elisha never gave that woman a chance to lay on the law and all her complaints; this is what he said, 'Look, woman, what can I do for you? What have you got in your house?' and straight away, b&s, without giving her a chance to take a breath, he threw it straight back into her court. 'Who me?' and immediately she's on the defensive; what have you got in your house? That's an interesting question. And coming back at the woman as part of her deliverance from her trouble, is a question that she's got to answer.

Now what did she have in her house? Well, I'll tell you what she had in her house, she had what no other family in Israel had in that house! and she didn't know it. And widowed though she was, she was to help the rest of the nation that lived round about her, and finished up, b&s, helping everyone else, having first come to find help for herself. You see, she was no ordinary widow, she was a widow of one of the sons of the prophets; she was rich and she didn't know it, as a matter of fact, she was very rich and didn't know it. And Elisha was to remind her of that, and you know, when that question came back at her, 'what have you got in your house?' she answered him like this, at the end of verse 2, 'she said, thy handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil'. So she did have something in her house, and what she had, b&s, she never realized the value of it. Because, that wasn't cooking oil; that wasn't cooking oil. See, her problem wasn't that she didn't have any food, her problem was that she didn't have any money. Of course, money buys food, we know, but that wasn't her immediate

problem, she didn't have any monetary resources, but she had a pot of oil.

Now, that wasn't cooking oil; you see, the word 'pot' there, is the only occurrence of the Hebrew word, in the whole range of the Old Testament, and it comes from a root which means 'to anoint and to smear', that was anointing oil. Now what is anointing oil, b&s? It's a different ingredient entirely from cooking oil. And of course, it has a vastly different purpose in its use. That oil is anointing oil and in Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 20 it tells us that there is oil in the house of the wise. That oil was used by people after they had bathed as in the 3rd chapter of Ruth and verse 3, to anoint their body that they might have healthy bodies and good clean skin. It was used in Psalm 45 and verse 7 and Psalm 104 and verse 15, as a symbol of prosperity and gladness in a spiritual sense. That anointing oil, b&s, was the Word of God, she was a widow of one of the sons of the prophets, and she was obviously a woman who had received from her husband during the course of his lifetime, much spiritual wealth which the rest of the nation lacked, and lacked it terribly. 'What can I do for you, woman? What have you got in your house?' and you know, b&s, it's an incredible fact that you can never get into the minds of people, because they never will practice it, and it will never be understood until it is practiced, that the best way out of your personal problems is service to others. And your problems fly right out of the window, and if we could only answer that question, whenever we come to a brother in the ecclesia for help, and to lay our problems at his feet, let's ask ourselves the question, 'what have we got in our house?' And I would not doubt that there wouldn't be a person here, in this hall tonight, who if we reviewed that honestly and sincerely, would not find something that he had in his grasp as personal resources, with which he couldn't help somebody else. There won't be a man, woman alive in this place, who wouldn't be able to find that! Now, she found it, and yet she is presented in this record, as the most dependent creature you'd ever imagine, a widow woman with two sons in bondage, and yet she had something there that nobody else had, and she didn't know the value of it! And she had that anointing oil, what a remarkable thing that was; and do you know the lesson that Elisha taught her? It's simple, terribly simply, when she had filled everyone else up, then and then only, would she be able to live. And the rest that was over, having paid off her debt, she was in debt alright. She was in debt to the people that were round about her, because they were empty and she was full.

And so in verse 3, 'he says, Go borrow vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels, and borrow not a few', the whole area was full of empty vessels. What were they empty of, b&s? They weren't empty of cooking oil, they could look after themselves in that regard; they could feed their flesh, they were empty of the oil that spoke of the amazing healing properties of the Word of God. The place was full of empty vessels. He says, you go and borrow and don't you borrow a few, because there're stacks of them around, and there is! Now you take the message of those empty vessels, you know, we read in the Psalms 112 and verse 9, 'that Yahweh disperses His goodness', He disperses His goodness because the world is empty of divine ideals, and Yahweh's full of them, and He disperses those ideals abroad as Paul points out to the Corinthians, that they might share their wealth. And we all have a wealth from God which we can disperse abroad; and what about these empty vessels? You know, b&s,

there was a fundamental commandment under the Law of Moses, so fundamental that no one could commence to do anything until this one was kept. The very first thing that an Israelite did when he came before Yahweh was to listen to this commandment, 'none shall appear before Me empty'. You think of that; we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to quote Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, but I'll tell you this, b&s, none shall appear before Yahweh in the kingdom empty, that is as fundamental as any of the truths of the Word of God which we've accepted. Absolutely basic to the truth that is, none shall appear before Me empty! and all around her were empty vessels. That law, of course, meant they had to bring some form of offering, but it was expressed in those general terms, I believe, the way that Yahweh wanted Israel to see, that I will have mercy and not sacrifice. Go and learn what that means, says Jesus; none would appear before Him empty, b&s, in the terms of the understanding of that law.

Do you know why there were Levites and there were priests? Well, we say because the priests, of course, were only from the house of Aaron, and they officiated at the central sanctuary. Yes they did, what did the Levites do? Well, they had 48 cities, didn't they, and those 48 cities were dotted throughout the land, from Dan to Beersheba and from Gilead right across to the western seaboard. There lacked not any village, that wasn't in proximity

to the cities of the Levites, 48 of them. What were they there for? To teach you what the principles of sacrifice were all about, because it was useless you going to Jerusalem with a burnt offering and giving it to the priest and saying, 'I don't know what the heck this is all about, but I'm told I've got to do it'. You had to learn that before you came, and so the Levites were called in the record, 'teaching priests'. And you know, b&s, we go to Yahweh empty, if we just appear before Him as bodies of flesh, that we might be jotted down on a roll, so we escape having the arranging brethren go looking for us, as to where we are. But it's no good sitting in a meeting and saying, 'I don't know what this is all about!', and it wouldn't be any good going before our High Priest, in the day of His appearing, and standing before Him and saying, 'well, I'm a Christadelphian because my parents were Christadelphians and my grand parents were Christadelphians, but as far as the truth is concerned, I wouldn't have a clue, but you teach me and we'll go into the kingdom'. USELESS, that's what the Levites were for, to teach them before they ever got to the central sanctuary, what that sacrifice was all about. NONE SHALL APPEAR BEFORE ME EMPTY.

Now that woman was to get hold of those vessels, and God says through Elisha, 'don't you borrow a few; there's plenty of them'. Do you know, in the 51st chapter of Jeremiah, Israel just prior to going into captivity, b&s, were called 'empty vessels'. Some of the very last words of the citizen of Zion were these words; we read in the 35th verse, 'The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say' (now here are the words of the inhabitant of Zion as he expresses his grief of going into captivity). And back in verse 34, we read, 'Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel', and that's what Israel was, b&s, when they went into captivity. All of them were empty vessels and that's why they went into captivity. And that's what that woman had to fill up.

Now you might say, well, perhaps we haven't got a vessel; yes we have! There's no one here that can claim not to have a vessel. Because this I know, whatever treasures you might have, I don't know the spiritual riches that you have or don't have, this I know, you've got a vessel, because Paul said, 'that we have this treasure in earthen vessels'. And sitting out there and standing here, and sitting alongside of me, is all earthen vessels; there's no one who hasn't got a vessel, we've got a vessel alright, but is there a treasure in it? That's what that woman had in that vessel in her house. There were treasures untold, b&s, in her understanding of the Word of God; you want help from me? Elisha says, 'whatever have you thought that you can do for others?' You want help from the ecclesia; the ecclesia doesn't do this, the ecclesia doesn't do that, the ecclesia doesn't take notice of me, the ecclesia ignores me, no one asks me home to their place, I never get asked out, I never had this, I never had that Well, what have you ever done for the ecclesia? That's the burning question, what's in your house? What's in your vessel? And in giving, b&s, we receive; of that, we can only testify as a matter of experience. That's got to be experienced, it an anomaly, like everything else is an anomaly in the truth. The immediate results are never appreciated by flesh; you use your fleshly logic and, of course, what other people can do for you immediately, is to your advantage; it's not in the ultimate. If you give, b&s, and you come with a need, and you give what little you have and leave yourself with nothing, you'll get back a hundred fold.

What about that woman with two mites? What about her? A widow woman who came with two mites, and threw into the temple treasury all her living, and Jesus had been dealing with three classes of people. He'd been dealing with three classes of people, He'd been dealing with the Sadducees who said that a woman had seven husbands, in the kingdom who's going to be her husband? That little widow didn't have that problem, she never had a husband. He next dealt with a crowd who came to Him and said, 'should we pay tax?' And Jesus said, 'you better give me a penny because I haven't got any', and He asked them to give Him a penny. 'Who's is that image and superscription?' In other words in asking for a penny He was telling them, it wasn't His problem because He hasn't got any money to pay tax; and that wasn't her problem either, because the last two mites went down into that coffer. And the third party that He dealt with in that record, was the man who said to Him, 'which is the great commandment of the Law?' and He got two; 'to love the LORD your God with all the heart, mind, and soul, and your neighbour as yourself', and that wasn't her problem either, because she gave all. So she didn't have a problem with her husband like the Sadducees, she didn't have a problem with tax like the Herodians, and she didn't have a problem with giving all like the other fellow, and in one little pitiful figure, there was fulfilled at the end of that glorious chapter in Mark, all of what the others lacked! She was richer than the whole darn lot of them! And you know, b&s, that's story's not completed is it, she went away, we don't know what happened to her from this day to that, could you ever imagine that she went away, and then lived in poverty until she starved to death? With a record behind her like that? You know, Jesus having just left the last of those groups, deliberately went over and sat by the treasury, and I believe, waited for her to come. To point out to the disciples that there in that woman was epitomized everything that those

three groups lacked in life. And in it went, and there's no doubt in my mind whatever, that that widow woman was cared for, probably never grew rich, it wouldn't have been Yahweh's intention to make her rich, but she would never lack either. 'I was young and now I'm old, said David, and I've never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread', and you can rest assured, that that woman wouldn't have begged bread either. Marvellous isn't it though, to consider that record, 'what have you got in your house?'

Then in verse 4, of 2 Kings 4, the woman was to go inside, and she was 'to shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons', and going inside and shutting the door, is interpreted by the Lord Jesus as a symbol of secret communion with God, in the sermon on the mount, remember? 'When thou prayest, go into thy closet and shut the door', there was to be a secret communion with that woman with her God, and it was over the oil that was going to be poured out of that vessel, in an never ending stream. Now I only know of one vessel, b&s, that contains that sort of oil in a never ending stream, and it isn't an earthen vessel. There's only one vessel, again we've all got it, which pours oil out in an never ending stream, and that's that Word there! And when we shut the door in secret communion with God about the understanding of that Word, that Word will pour out as long as our concentration lasts. And that doesn't last very long, our concentration; but as long as we concentrate in secret communion with God upon that Word, it will give out an never ending stream of oil. That's what she had to do! And then she was to get her sons to bring these vessels.

And verse 5 says, 'So she went from him and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her, and she poured out' and the Hebrew says 'they were bringing to her and she was pouring continually', and that, b&s, was the duty of the sons of the prophets, to have Israel coming and to be pouring out continually as they came in the door. That's what we need today, isn't it? You know, we were talking at the bible school about the need for brethren to rise up today and get down to the Word. We were talking up there about the dearth there is of leaders today; we've got to supply three leaders for every bible school, that's nine a year. That's only the bible school, take all your individual ecclesial affairs, take all your special efforts, where are they coming from? There's no lack of oil, there's an endless reservoir of oil, what the lack is today is of vessels to get poured into, that they might pour into others. That's what's lacking! We need brethren and sisters, we need young men and older men too, to get down to that Word, that as long as empty vessels appear in the ecclesia, and of course, every newly immersed member is in a relative sense, an empty vessel, they've all got to be filled. But I can tell you why it doesn't happen; it's easy, you know, people say to me, what's the problem? I know what the problem is, the problem's simple! **WE DON'T CLOSE THE DOOR ON OURSELVES**. We don't do it, you say to me, how do I know? It's obvious, because the results are not there. People come to me and say, 'I want to spend some time with you about methods of bible study'; I could show them methods of bible study, I could talk to you all day and all night about different methods of bible study, but you know, that's not the important thing. Bible study, b&s, consists of blood, sweat and tears, and if you can't mark your bible with them, throw away your ink and your pen. Bible study consists of getting into your desk, closing that door, and concentration, hour

after hour after hour after hour. Saturday from sunrise to beyond midday, if you want to get anything out of the Word of God worthwhile; if you don't want to do that, don't ask me about methods of bible study. CLOSE THAT DOOR! and that's what's not happening. Why? because b&s lack faith; no, I don't think that's true, I don't think the generation before this one was any better; it's just that this crazy world is worse, and has filled our pockets and our houses with things that we don't lack in our house and they're not spiritual. And when you get things, you have to have time to look after things and those things rob you of the time, and not only that, b&s, they're exciting things so they teach you excitement after excitement after excitement, and you can't sit still long enough to study the Word of God. When did you go to a brother or sister's house last, and have other families come over for no other reason than to sit and do the readings, and to talk about the truth. A mere social visit out of the blue was a common thing in my day, when I first came into the truth; now if I knock upon a brother's door, he opens the door and says, 'what's the problem'? It's true, 'what's the problem?' Why is that so? Because we're absolutely mad, the whole lot of us, we're stark raving mad, that's what we are; crazy, mad and crazy because we're not getting down to what that Word says. CLOSE THAT DOOR, OPEN THAT BIBLE, and I'll pour out as long as your concentration lasts, and remember this, she was a widow of one of the sons of the prophets. So she's no ordinary widow. Her husband was a full vessel, but he's gone; but he had left her with a heritage of understanding which I believe, that oil was but a symbol.

You say I might be reading a lot into this! I don't think I am; I think that's what the whole's things about, what have you got in your house? And she had anointing oil! And so they went out and they found them, brought them in, and she filled them up, and there were those in Israel, b&s, who hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and they were to be filled. And you know, when the Lord Jesus Christ said that in the Sermon on the Mount, He was the vessel that carried Yahweh's oil in Israel and He went in, pouring it into everybody He could find. He filled them all up that came to Him; not all of them, because all of them wouldn't be full, but those that opened their heart to Him, He poured the truth into them, and they became full of the power of God's Word, and dispersed that abroad. And what did they have in material possessions? 'Silver and gold have I none, but what I have I freely give' said Peter. What did he have? Huh, silver and gold, he was richer than all of those who poured into Solomon's temple. Of course he was, and he caused that lame man to leap up, by the power of God, which of course, was but a symbolic act that he would fill that man later with the spirit power of God's Word, that he might not only leap up in mortality, but live forever more. Silver and gold we've got none, what we've got, b&s, we freely give, that was Peter's words; and he was like that widow of the sons of the prophets.

And verse 7 tells us, 'and she came and told the man of God, that all the vessels were filled', of course, and he said, 'go sell the oil, pay thy debt and live thou and thy children of the rest'. And you see, the question was there could only be liberty for her and her sons when everyone else was helped. Now, that's a marvellous story, it's a wonderful story; it's a little bit more, b&s, than coming here tonight to give expositions of the Word of God. These are vital and these are living issues, you try that experiment, I know you'll

think about it and say, 'ah, it's all very well, but John doesn't understand my problem; he doesn't see the difficulties I'm in; I'm not able to do what that woman did'. Well, that's a widow woman, and I've just told you what a widow woman is; there's no one here in her need. We haven't got her needs so she was able to do it; there was something she found. You think about what you've got, what spiritual resources you can draw upon; you might think they're pitiful. You know, b&s, you don't have to be an exponent of the Word, a practice of the truth is an exposition of it; and that old adage is still true, actions speak louder than words, and if we just serve with our hands and our feet, it's an exposition of the truth, isn't it? And you know, there are some remarkable people who serve others, that when you line them up in life, and compare them with others, they don't have the ability, the qualities, the resources that other people do, but they pour out in service, in a most remarkable fashion, and I've never seen them 'want'. I can think now, standing here, of people like that, and I've never seen them begging bread. And the answer to their problem is in service to others. Now that's a significant miracle!

In that 4th chapter of Kings, over in verse 38, there's another one, and it runs through to verse 41. We read, 'And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets. And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild wine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not. So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof. But he said, Then bring meal, And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot'(or as the margin says, 'no evil thing in the pot'). That's an interesting miracle, b&s, you know what that is, don't you? it's an enactment of the Last Supper. Elisha has come again to Gilgal, he's come again because he started from there when he went with the great prophet Elijah. And what happened when he came there the first time? The sons of the prophets, especially 50 special men of the sons of the prophets, stood around and watched him go from Gilgal with Elijah and said, 'he thinks he's going to be Elijah's successor; we'll see!' and all the way along the track he met with opposition, didn't he? because of his burning desire to help the work of God in the earth, and to be selected by God, that he might be given the greater garth to abound in the work of the truth. And all away along he met opposition, and it all started at Gilgal, and now he's come again to Gilgal, and he is their leader. And there's no doubt about it; and if there was any question as to who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom; it's settled! He is as far as they're concerned.

And there he is, their leader, undisputed leader, and he calls this feast in Gilgal. Now it wasn't the Gilgal, of course, down in the Jordan valley, to which Israel first came. But nonetheless, it had the same name, b&s, and Gilgal, of course, means 'a rolling away'; it's the word for a wheel really, or related to the word for a 'wheel' gilgal, and it first came into being, of course, to commemorate the circumcision when Israel were 'cut around', that they might be circumcised, and to use the words of Joshua chapter 5 and verse 9, 'that Yahweh might roll away the reproach of Egypt'. And circumcising the men of Israel,

He rolled away the dirtiness and the filthiness of Egypt from off those men, and they came into God's Land clean. Here was Elisha in Gilgal, and there was to be a circumcision of a different nature. And Paul tells us as far as the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned, that we are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by the circumcision of Christ, not rolling away the reproach of Egypt, but more than that, putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, Colossians 2:10-12. And so there was a rolling away of the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, as He was 'cut around' as it were, and divided from the flesh and spirit, crucified the flesh and made alive in the Spirit, to live unto God, b&s, and by that circumcision we are brought into covenant relationship with God, Gilgal, and He is our leader, undisputed leader, and none can argue about that now, though they might have before.

But now it's a fact of life, and there he is, and what does he do? He comes at a time, says the record, 'when there was a dearth in the land.' Now you know, when the Lord sat down in Jerusalem to commemorate that last supper with His disciples, outside, b&s, was one of the greatest famines in all history. Not a famine of bread nor of a thirst for water, said the prophet, but a famine of the Word of God. And Israel had reached the pinnacle of their iniquity and they were starving to death; there was a dearth in the Land. And so we find as the story goes on that the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, and there they were, sitting at his feet as it were, that very expression is used in that way, 'sitting at one's feet' as pupils do before their master, Deut.33:3, which speaks of the future gathering of the sons of the prophets, ourselves, b&s, when we will sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was no spiritual famine for them, they were going to sit down to a wonderful feast, not only of bread and water, but of the living power of God's Word, as it was manifest in the salvation of God in the personage of Elisha. And Elisha's words were 'set on the great pot', why would he say that? because he wanted that to be a communal meal; wasn't a question of setting on several little pots, one for each one of them, set on the great pot, he said, and he called for a communal meal in the place of 'the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt'. And if ever there was an eloquent testimony of the type of the Last Supper, there it is, as the Lord Jesus Christ made a great feast for those disciples, a communal meal that they might commemorate the act that He was about to perform, for ever more they might commemorate it, when He was about to make that last and final act, with the rolling away of the body of the sins of the flesh.

Set on a great pot, that's what we do every Sunday morning, we set on a great pot, and as they sat down to eat, 'one went out into the field', and you know, you could almost put in brackets, (and it was night). It wasn't night of course, because you can't gather in the field at night, but you know what I mean by that? That as the Lord sat down there with that communal meal with His disciples, Judas went out and it was night! And he went away, b&s, to sow his wild oats, didn't he? He was a poisonous herb among those disciples; the record says this one 'went out to gather herbs', he went out to gather herbs alright, he went out to 'gather of the wild vine'. And you know, Israel are likened in the prophecy of Jeremiah, to a foreign vine, Jeremiah 2:21, in the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy and in verse 32, they are called the 'vine of Sodom'. And there, b&s, in the one that went out, was typified the poisonous nature of those in Israel who would

have taken the Son of God, and got rid of Him because He was the heir of the vineyard, they were a degenerate plant, a wild vine, the vine of Sodom, a foreign vine says Jeremiah. And he went out, b&s, and he gathered of the wild gourds, a word which signifies to 'burst', and it seemed that he gathered it from the wild cucumber, when it was ripe it had the habit of bursting open and showering its seeds all around, in the midst of a seeded and very, very awful aroma as far as the liquid was concerned, that encased those seeds. Bursting out with iniquity, flinging the seeds out that they might be sown in the earth and wet down by that stinking liquid in which they were encased in that pod. And you know, he got all of those wild gourds and brought them back, and they were typical, b&s, of what Paul talked about in the 12th chapter of Hebrews, when he talked about 'bringing forth fruit unto God', he talked about those aspects of life which take long patience to develop the fruit of righteousness. The fruit of righteousness takes a long time to develop; we've got to have patience, we wait patiently for that fruit because it is the end of the process.

But he went on to speak about those, he said, who spear up trouble, trouble just leaps out of the ground like a noxious weed, just absolutely springs up trouble, he says in the 12th chapter of Hebrews, and that's what this type of thing did, grew very quickly and burst and splattered seeds everywhere, in the midst of the stinking liquid and grew up all around, those noxious weeds which were poisonous to mankind; and that's what one went out and got and tried to bring into that feast. As Judas, b&s, was a wild vine, brought forth bitter grapes, and in his corruption he would have, had a lesser man been involved in that feast, he may have poisoned the whole feast, and caused the Romans to take away all of the disciples, and brought to an end the work of God, if there was a lesser man in control of that feast. But he didn't count upon the Lord Jesus Christ, he didn't see what sort of man He was, and how did Elisha cure his problem?

He called for meal, and there was a great contrast between what that one brought in from the field, and what Elisha called for. He brought poison into the ecclesia, he tried to poison the work of God, b&s, but what did Elisha call for? He called for meal, and Jesus took bread and that's what bread is, meal, and He said, 'this is My body given for you'. And that's what Judas didn't count on, he came to realize too late, the type of man he tried to betray, Who was more than equal to any poisonous motives in that room. And by the power of His own example, as seen in the bread of life, He gave life, b&s, to those who would die of the poisons of humanity, He was a greater man, far, far greater than the one who tried to betray Him, more than equal to any poison that might have been brought into that situation. And when they put that meal in, when they put that in there was no evil thing in that pot. And you know, it is true of us, isn't it, you only have to make the application to ourself; we gather Sunday morning by Sunday morning and into that room comes all sorts of thoughts and intents of the heart, and sometimes, disgruntled brethren and sisters, waiting for the meeting to finish, to whisper into the ears of others, to poison the whole atmosphere. Has that ever been done in your ecclesia? and they sit there for the 45 minutes or thereabouts that the meeting takes to progress to the emblems, and think of nothing else than what they're going to say afterwards. They've been gathering from the wrong vine, and you know, if the exhortation and the reading of the Word affects them, and the meal is brought out, and

if that is assimilated properly into that audience, it could do away with all those evil motives, and as far as that communal feast is concerned, there is no evil thing left, but all have been assimilated into the likeness of the Son of God. That's what I believe Elisha did, when he throw it into the pot; he didn't take the evil out, he changed it by the ingredients which he himself offered. Got rid of it, changed it, threw it in there, and there was no evil thing in that pot! That was a significant miracle.

And the last one I want to talk about, followed straight afterwards, and you know why it does? because it is intimately related to it. And we read in verse 42, out of the blue, 'there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God (note that) brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat' (that is Elisha said that) And do you know what that is telling us? It's unbelievable how that's in the record; you talk about the Word of God being inspired. Look, we've just read about the memorial supper, what was the effect of the memorial supper? We know what the effect of it was, they sang a hymn and went out into the Mount of Olives, they came and arrested the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, they crucified and slew Him, He rose to the right hand of power, and the gospel went out to the Gentiles. 'And there came a man from Baal-shalisha', do you know what that means? It means 'the lord of three countries'. And out of the blue a man appears from the lord of three countries, as if that very name is indicating from all around the place, beyond the confines of what was then known, the lord of three countries, Baal-shalisha, and the only other time that we read about Shalisha in God's record, is when Saul was looking for his father's asses that were lost.

How about that for significance? Looking for his father's asses that were lost, and Saul the fleshly king of Israel, Israel's choice, lost his father's asses, (Israel in an unclean state), while a little boy in Bethlehem, was looking after His Father's sheep, and that's how those two men are introduced to us in the record, and that's the only occurrences of Shalisha. And whilst Israel was lost, b&s, (as the unclean ass is lost unless redeemed by the land), from the Israel rejecting the scripture, 'seeing you count yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, though we turn to the lord of three lands'. And what does he bring to the feast? And while the Judas of Israel is out gathering from the wild vine and the degenerate plant of Sodom, the poisonous things of his nature, do you know what he brought? You know, it's unbelievable, but every expression used in that verse, in found in the Law of Moses of the things that Israel should have been offering. You'll find every expression in that verse, are found somewhere in the Law, as to what Israel should offer. Not only that, b&s, but I want you to notice the way in which it was offered.

You see, there came this man from the lord of three countries, and it says 'he brought the man of God', now it doesn't say Elisha, why doesn't it say Elisha? Well, you might say, it's the same man; of course it is, but never treat the scripture like that! If you're going to be revered for that book, you'll never treat it like that! When I read that I knew there was something there for me to know, I knew that! When I read it was the man of God and I know one of those, I read on, 'he brought the man of God the bread of the firstfruits'. Go back sometime to the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy verses 3 and 5

(which we won't turn up now) and you'll find what that was. Do you know what it was? It spoke about the bread of the firstfruits were to be given to the priests and the Levites for their portion, why? because they represented God, and God in every meal, like every father, is served first, before the rest of the family eats. So, he didn't bring that to Elisha, though he did, he brought it to the man of God, because that was his understanding of the truth. You see, he had his priorities right from the beginning, make no mistake about that, and the very expression of Deuteronomy 18 in relation to the bread of the firstfruits being given to the representative of God, there it is! What an incredible thing that is.

And then he brought 20 loaves of barley, 20 loaves of barley; barley, we know what that was. Where would you find that in the Law? Why of course, Passover, incredible! Are we right about the first miracle? Well, what's he bringing barley for? Can't you see the point? Here is the recognition of a man from the lord of three countries of the principles of the Passover, when Israel killed the Passover and rejected it as a carpenter's son, as they thought. But here he is accepting 20 loaves of barley that he brings. What was barley? It was the harvest, of course, when they left Egypt, the barley harvest had come to fruition; what was the significance of barley? Well, of course, it was a humble food; 2 Kings 7 said it was half the price of wheat; in 1 Kings 4 it's what you would feed the horses; and in Ezekiel's prophecy it's taken as a lower class meal that he had to eat to show the poverty of Israel, so it is that which is rejected of men, and despised of men and fed to horses; it was a barley cake, remember b&s? that rolling down the hill, knocked over all the Midianites and represented Gideon in all his fear and trembling and humility. Barley speaks of that which is humble in the sight of God, truly humble, but which God uses to knock over Midianites and to make meals for the great Passover Lamb. And when they come before the nation, and they wave the sheaf of the firstfruits on the morrow after the sabbath, the three days later of the Passover feast in our Lord's year, when they waved the sheaf of the firstfruits that was a sheaf of barley. That man brought 20 loaves of barley, speaks of the humility of the One who was to come, and when you talk about humility, b&s, it is the recognition of one's weakness, isn't it? and in the recognition of one's weakness, there is the need for the grace of God, all humble men see a need for the grace of God, and those 20 loaves got served out to 100 men; work out with a pencil and paper how much they got each. They all got 1/5 of a loaf, isn't that unbelievable?

So here is a man from the Gentiles, who has the very terms of the Law in his hand, when one from Israel tries to poison the feast. It's unbelievable! He brought also we read, the full ears of corn in the husk thereof, and if you want to look at your leisure at the 23rd chapter of Leviticus and verse 14, you'll find that expression used there in a context of when Israel got into the Land of promise, they had to bring to God, the full ears of corn in the husk thereof, before they ever ate a thing for themselves. And once again, there was clear recognition in this man's mind, of the greatness of God, and not only so, b&s, but the fact that he gave it to Elisha, that in his recognition of the greatness of God, he saw the need of a mediator. For men's opinion of God may vary, from man to man according to his understanding, and there may have been among the Jews, a superstitious reference of God which caused them to back off, and yet they still felt that even in that state, from the afar off state, they could approach to God. But as a

man's awareness of God grows, b&s, and the reverence deepens, from superstition into the truth of the scriptures, he doesn't only see himself far from God, he sees the need for one between him and God. That's what that man did! He had a wonderful perception of the power of God's Word, and of the principles thereof. And all of that, we have in the record immediately after that communal meal with the sons of the prophets, isn't that unbelievable? Absolutely marvellous.

You know, take for example, take one classical example, when Israel under the Law thought they knew the jots and tittles of the Law, and who had the scriptures read every sabbath day in the synagogue, every sabbath day they read the scripture, and Paul says 'they fulfilled it in killing the very One that it was speaking about'. Such was the knowledge of Israel! And when the gospel call went out, one of them came from the isle of Cyprus, Barnabas by name, came across to the apostles and instead of asking for the tithes under the Law as a Levite that he was, that he could participate in, he turned the Law right around and he gave everything he had in life and he sold all his land, and reversed every principle of the Law, and gave his life to the service of the truth. And he was the one among all the others, instrumental in carrying that gospel past the boundary of Israel to the Gentiles. And when news came to the apostles of the Gentiles coming into the truth at Antioch, they sent forth Barnabas, who when he saw the grace of God, was glad and exhorted them all, 'that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord', and his name wasn't Barnabas, it was Joseph, and he increased the family of God, as the word 'increase' means. And being a good man and full of the Holy Spirit, he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord, and much people were added to the Lord. Why? because there was a Levite who saw what the principles were all about, when the rest of the nation had rejected Him. And that happened immediately after, you might say, the preaching of the apostles, when they set forth these things, and only 3,000 of all those Jews believed, and immediately after, out comes a Levite, turns the Law right around, and goes right out and gets hold of those people, from the lord of three countries. If you follow that record through, it is absolutely beautiful!

And when Elisha got those 20 loaves in verse 43, 'Give the people that they may eat: for thus saith Yahweh, They shall eat and leave thereof'. Could you image, b&s, that the Lord Jesus Christ would not have had that in His mind when He fed the 5,000 and the 4,000? 'How many baskets took ye up, He told them, when we fed the 5,000?' 12, they said. 'How many baskets took ye up when we fed the 4,000?' 7. 'Having eyes see ye not, having ears hear ye not; they shall eat and leave thereof'. And there was a great message for those 12 men, b&s, and as they stood before their Lord with those 12 little baskets, having fed the 5,000, the very Greek word, 'a little basket' and I believe, it's beyond all doubt when you read the record correctly, those 5 loaves and 2 fishes didn't belong to that lad, it was their food, the lad was carrying it for them. And the Lord said to them, 'what have you got in your house?' They said, 'nothing', and they had to stand there, red in the face, each one of them before their Lord, with these little baskets full of what was left over. And they were being taught a dramatic lesson, and when later on, they came to Decapolis (the city of ten cities) where all the mongrels dwelt, the half breeds, the slumites, the Julius Ceasars' citizens that he had put there, the Gentiles that

they absolutely despised, when they brought the scraps back then, b&s, they had 7 big baskets. Seven, number of the covenant and they were big baskets, there were a lot more to come into the truth, weren't there? They shall eat and leave thereof. Those were the principles of that feast which that man from Baal-Shalisha clearly recognized.

'So he set before them and they did eat, and left thereof according to the word of Yahweh.' And that miracle closes, b&s, with a clear identification between Elisha's word and Yahweh's Word. 'They shall eat and leave thereof according to the Word of Yahweh', and there was before them, in the personage of Elisha, in a lesser sense, the Word made flesh, not in the sense of the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, but in the sense of the living manifestation of God's Word, there he was, 'according to the word of Yahweh'.

And therefore, b&s, as we leave you with those two brief studies on the man Elisha, never ever run away and think among yourselves, that because of the greatness of Elijah, which does overshadow him really, and in the way in which that story is exciting, never believe there's nothing in the story of Elisha. I've dealt with three of those miracles, you've got thirteen left to go, so you've got plenty of food for thought, if you want to make a study of the man Elisha. And our prayer is, b&s, that in the course of time which is left to us before our Lord comes, that we may rekindle in each of our hearts, and I don't exclude myself, we rekindle in our hearts, the thoughts of the scriptures of truth, that the next time we jump up out of our chair to go tearing off to the ecclesia or to our brother to get help, we'll stop in our tracks, and ask the question, what have we got in our house?