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ELISHA DOING RESTITUTION WORK.

– *AUG. 14. – 2 KINGS 4:25-37. –*

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." – Psa. 55:22.

ELISHA did receive a double portion of Elijah's spirit, or power. Not only did Jordan part before him, in obedience to his faith and at the stroke of the mantle, but other important works followed. Coming to a school of the prophets, they found that in preparing the dinner of vegetables something had gotten into the stew which they recognized to be poisonous, and the dinner was spoiled; but Elisha miraculously antidoted the poison, and made the dinner wholesome. Again, the people of Jericho complained that the fountain of water which supplied them was brackish, and he healed the waters so that the fountain became known as the fountain of Elisha, and the place is so known to-day.

These may be considered as typical of the restitution works which the Elisha class will introduce to the world. What do people who are religiously disposed, and who seek to understand the Word of the Lord, need, as the first feature of restitution blessings? Will it not be that something shall be put into their mess of pottage, that will destroy its poisonous errors, and make it health-giving, nutritious? Surely the peoples of civilized lands have God's Word in their hands, and its contents are good and nourishing and health-giving; but some of the theological cooks have unintentionally added doctrines of the Evil One so that it is made to the people a poisonous dinner, injurious, as represented in the various creeds of Christendom. And what does the world in general need more than that the springs of the water of life (which have become corrupted and brackish, through false theories and misinterpretations of the divine Word and plan) should be corrected, healed, made sweet and pure and refreshing? And such restitution work will be accomplished, [R2345 : page 232] we understand, by the successors of the Gospel Church in a much larger

measure than the Church itself is able to accomplish it now – the Church's work being specifically the making of herself ready. – Rev. 19:7.

Further, we have the record of how the poor widow and her sons were helped by the prophet Elisha, to whom she appealed in her distress. A debt was upon her, and, according to the terms of the Law, her sons would be bound to serve the creditor until the indebtedness had been discharged, or until the Jubilee year should be ushered in; and as she was a widow she needed her sons' assistance at home. The prophet saw her distress, sympathized with her, and assisted: the assistance being rendered in a manner which helped to develop her faith in the Lord. The only merchantable thing she had in her house was a pot of oil; and the prophet directed her to send among her neighbors and borrow all the empty vessels that she could obtain, and to pour all full of oil, which then she could sell, and from the proceeds pay the debt and have something left; and so she did, according to directions. Does not this act of relieving the poor illustrate restitution powers and work also? Are we not told that in that time the Lord will "lift up the poor and the needy, and him that hath no helper?" There is in this a lesson of the Lord's sympathy with us in our earthly difficulties; a lesson of his willingness to assist us to pay our honest debts; and a lesson of the propriety of paying honest debts. And there is another lesson respecting how God is pleased to bless the use of the things which we have, rather than to send us other things, or to miraculously put the money into our pockets. There is also a lesson for faith, because it was in proportion to her faith that the woman gathered a large or small number of vessels, and therefore got a larger or a smaller evidence of divine bounty and mercy. Let us, when dealing with the Lord, remember that all the gold and silver are his, and the "cattle on a thousand hills," and let our works be in harmony with our faith.

We come now to the particular feature of this lesson, the Shunammite woman and her son: and this also contains a suggestion

of the great restitution blessing of awakening the dead. This Shunammite has the record of the Scriptures that she was "a great woman." Apparently she and her husband were comfortably situated in life; perhaps indeed the greatness referred in part to wealth, but evidently she was a more than ordinary woman in other respects, as is indicated by the narrative. She may have been superior to her husband in intelligence, as the narrative seems to indicate. She had the kind of greatness, too, which recognizes goodness, and reverences the Lord, and those who are his. Seeing the prophet pass her place occasionally, probably on his way to the schools of the prophets, she hospitably urged him to take dinner with her, and so, apparently, every time he passed that way he stopped to partake of her hospitality. And the more this great woman saw of the Lord's prophet the more she realized that it was a favor to have him under the roof, so she said to her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall, and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool and a candlestick: and it shall be when he cometh to us that he shall turn in thither." Altho apparently the husband was less religiously [R2346 : page 232] inclined than his wife, and perhaps less "great" in some other respects, yet this courteous request, expressed in so wifely and proper a manner, appealed to him, and was acted upon, and we may say that part of the woman's greatness is manifested in this her dealing with her own husband. How many women there are who, if they felt themselves the greater of the two, would altogether forget the propriety of consulting with the husband, the divinely appointed head of the family, and requesting cooperation in religious work and benevolence, rather than demanding it. Modesty and humility are true signs of greatness, both in men and women.

Hotels and lodging houses and restaurants were not arrangements of those days, and consequently hospitality was more practised than to-day. In some respects we have lost considerably by the change of customs, for the *spirit* of hospitality seems to be considerably less than in olden times. We believe that so far as possible every Christian

family would do well, if their means would justify, to have such a spare room for the entertainment of the Lord's servants who may come their way. We believe that a blessing, spiritual if not temporal, comes to all who seek to cultivate this spirit of loving generosity, benevolence, kindness, in the entertainment of the Lord's servants, – and in general the household of faith, as they may have opportunity.

A similar spirit of benevolence and thoughtfulness for others was in the Prophet, who requested his servant to notice whether or not the kind entertainer was lacking of anything which would minister to her comfort, which he could supply. The answer was that she was childless; and seizing the opportunity the Prophet informed her that she should have a son. There is a lesson here for each of us, to the effect that if we are the recipients of favor from others – either from the Lord or his people – if we have the same spirit we will seek to do something in return. Those who accept of the favors of others, and lack the desire and fail to seek the opportunity to do as much or more in return, are certainly lacking the Lord's spirit in this particular. **[R2346 : page 233]**

Years passed; the child grew to boyhood, and while in the harvest field was taken ill with something like sunstroke, and died. The mother, with exhibitions of great faith, laid the dead child in the prophet's room, upon his bed, and immediately started with her servant in all haste to find the Prophet. When the Prophet by the mouth of his servant asked, "Is it well?" she had faith enough to answer, "It is well;" and reaching the prophet's presence she reminded him of the fact that she had not requested the son, that he had been a gift, and intimated that if now the lad were taken away, instead of being a gift or benefaction to her the matter would be only a sorrow; yet she did not say that the boy was dead, apparently having full confidence in the power of God, through the Prophet, to awaken him, even from the sleep of death. The Prophet, full of faith also, sent his staff to be laid upon the child, at the hands of the servant; but the mother had not so much faith in the staff as in the Prophet, and would be satisfied with

nothing else than a visit from him. When Elisha arrived he found the child dead, but neither did this stagger his faith: he shut the door, and prayed to the Father in secret, but not only did he pray, but he used restorative means, which finally resulted in the awakening of the child from the sleep of death, when he delivered him to his mother, whose faith had thus its reward.

There are several lessons here for us. Considering Elisha as a type, and his works as typical of the works of restitution in the beginning of the Millennial age, we note what the New Testament Scriptures clearly affirm, that vitality will be restored to humanity so that "All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth." And the earthly agents in the Kingdom will no doubt be participators to a considerable extent in restitution work along this line, as well as along other lines. Thus Elisha in his companionship with Elijah seems to represent the "tribulation saints," and subsequently the work and workers of the entire Millennial age.

But we may draw lessons of profit for the present time from the Shunammite woman's faith and the Prophet's faith and works. Apparently the Prophet was perplexed by this case. The staff in the hands of his servant had been without avail; his own efforts for a considerable time were without avail. Here was room for doubt as to whether or not the Lord's power had forsaken him. He walked the little room repeatedly, and again and again laid his face upon the child's face, and his hands upon the child's hands, presumably the meanwhile praying the divine blessing. But finally faith triumphed. This case reminds us of the one in which the disciples failed to cast out the devil from the boy, while the Lord and Peter, James and John were in the Mount of Transfiguration. Our Lord's remark was, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." So, apparently the Lord is pleased to exercise his power either slowly or quickly, according to circumstances and conditions.

We are not to consider this as a resurrection of the dead, in the proper Scriptural sense of the word resurrection. It was merely a temporary awakening from the sleep of death, as in the case of Lazarus and the son of the widow of Nain and the daughter of Jairus. These parties all, later, relapsed into death. Nor could their subsequent death be properly termed the second death, unless, after their awakening, they by wilful sin came under its condemnation. And to whatever extent we are less than perfect and possessed of life in its completeness, to that extent each is already in death, whether he have a greater or a smaller spark of vitality remaining. As heretofore seen, in discussing the subject of resurrection, that word signifies a raising up – all the way up to all from which we fell in Adam, namely, to the perfection of life. – See our issue for April 1, '93.
