

THE WIDOW IN PERIL

Elisha is very active as a prophet to the people in chapter 4. The following four ministries to the people are recorded in chapter four.

2 Kings 4:1-7	A prophets' widow in peril
2 Kings 4:8-37	Shunammite woman in peril
2 Kings 4:38-41	Sons of prophets get food poisoning
2 Kings 4:42-44	Miraculous feeding

We will examine our lesson text by the following five homiletical points.

2 Kings 4:1a	Deceased	Son of the prophets
2 Kings 4:1b	Debt	Servitude to debt
2 Kings 4:2	Despair	Scarcity but one jar of oil
2 Kings 4:3-6	Deficiency	Search from other resources
2 Kings 4:7	Divine intervention	Sell and pay debt plus more than enough

This lesson is based on a basis bible doctrinal principle regarding widows and orphans given to the church in:

(James 1:27) "This is pure and undefiled religion in sight of our God and Father, to visit **orphans and widows in their distress**, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

In other words, this doctrinal principle crosses dispensational lines (Old and New Testament time periods).

We will study four aspects of a prophet's widow's peril and how God meant her need and more than enough.

1. Our lesson describes a wife of a deceased prophet who was left with two children and a debt without any sustainable income to meet her family's basic needs.

The average age for widowhood is 62 with 1/3 of them living in poverty in USA. In time of war, it lowers this average age to mid 50's.

This widow's two sons were being placed into debtor's servitude to pay off the prophet's debt.

(2 Kings 4:1) "Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, 'Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord; and the creditors have come to take my two children to be slaves (servants).'"

Debtor servitude was part of the Mosaic Law during the Jewish Age:

(Lev.25:39-41; Deut.15:1-11) [7 Th year] "And if a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave's service. He shall be with you as a hired man, as if he were a sojourner; he shall serve with you until the year of Jubilee. He shall then go back to his family that he may return to the property of his forefathers."

Abuse of the debtor servitude principle would bring divine discipline (Amos 2:6-8; 8:4-6; Jer.7:6-7).

2. Many ministers today find it impossible to own a house because they don't stay in one place longer than 5-7 years and normally don't make enough money to save for ownership in the future.

Moving every 5-7 years is an enormous cost because of their library and office, especially if they have to store it plus house rent.

Missionaries, who live at poverty level while raising families, whether on the home or foreign mission fields without any possibility to save for their retirement, ill health or widowhood also suffer in the same way.

Therefore, one of my great desires has been to purchase a property large enough to share ministry facilities encompassing facilities such as a church, a school, camp grounds, a conference center, as well as residences for missionaries and ministers on furlough or training or retirement or ill health and for widows and orphans (Isa.1:17).

I found 77 acres of land with a 6 acre lake house, with an artisan well on it for \$500,000, but I haven't been able to generate sufficient interest in this vision. Therefore I have personally chosen to follow this vision on a different path. We are presently doing these ministries by renting other properties all over the country.

3. God has promised to be the widow's guardian and protector:

(Prov.15:25b) "But He will establish the boundary of the widow."

(Deut.10:18; Ps.68:5; 146:9) "He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing."

One way a Priest-Nation took care of the widows was the Levirate marriage (Deut.25:5-10; Lev.25:48) [Naomi and Ruth].

Two other ways they took care of the widows was the 3rd year charity tax (Deut.14:28-29; 16:9-14; 26:12-13) and free enterprise generosity (Deut.24:19; Ruth 2:2-3, 15-19).

History records that Constantine provided a tax concession and legal aid for the widow.

4. Christian adult children are instructed to provide for their parents and grandparents. Charity should begin at home in a Christian family (James 1:27).

(1 Tim.5:3-5) "Honor widows who are widow indeed; but if any widow has **children or grandchildren**, let them first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family, and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God."

(1 Tim.5:8) "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever."

Aristotle said, "A man must starve himself before watching his parents starve."

Paul said, "Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." (Eph.6:2-3; Ex.20:12; Deut.5:16)

Euripides said, "The most haunting sin on earth is failure in one's duty to parents."

Jesus said to John, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour John took Jesus' mother into his household (John 19:26-27).