

# **Elisha, the Prophet of Grace**

## **6) You Are What You Eat**

***'And Elisha returned to Gilgal, and there was a famine in the land. Now the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets." So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, though they did not know what they were. Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, "Man of God, there is death in the pot!" And they could not eat it. So he said, "Then bring some flour." And he put it into the pot, and said, "Serve it to the people, that they may eat." And there was nothing harmful in the pot'***

**(2 Kings 4:38-41)**

- ✓ **The famine mentioned here may be the seven-year famine alluded to in 2 Kings 8:1-3**
- ✓ **Put on a large pot. In a famine they would normally have only used a small pot**
- ✓ **So a man went out into the field to gather herbs, that they might have a vegetable stew**
- ✓ **He found a wild vine with gourds, shred them into the pot of stew, unaware that it was a poisonous plant**
- ✓ **When they began eating it the men cried out, 'There is death in the pot!'**

✓ **Spiritually, a famine depicts a scarcity of the Word of God,** *“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, “That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it”* **(Amos 8:11-12)**

✓ **When there is a famine of the Word of God, Satan ensures there is no shortage of spurious teaching.** *‘Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth’* **(2 Tim.4:2-4)**

- ✓ **The man that brought these was not asked to do so. He was sincere and wanted to serve, but he should have sat at the feet of Elisha as the sons of the prophets did, and as Mary sat at the feet of Jesus while Martha served**
- ✓ **Heresy is the result of religious zeal without knowledge**

- ✓ **This incident illustrates that believers are subject to the conditions of a fallen planet, the same as unbelievers. Gen.3:17; Rom.8:22**
- ✓ **Not only are there weeds and thorns, but that which is noxious and venomous too. Some of the most harmless looking herbs and berries can produce terrible suffering and even death, if eaten by humans or animals**
- ✓ **Yet God has provided protection against these, through animal instinct and human senses**



## **The same applies to the spiritual world**

***'But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil'***  
**(Heb.5:14)**

***'Test all things; hold fast what is good'***  
**(1 Thes.5:21)**

***'Take heed what you hear'***  
**(Mark 4:24)**

***'And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers'*** **(John 10:4-5)**

- ✓ **Those who bring false teaching are referred to as 'false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ' (2 Cor.11:13)**
- ✓ **They corrupt their hearers from the simplicity that is in Christ by preaching a different gospel (2 Cor.11:4)**
- ✓ **What is the 'death' in the pot? It is legalism. 'I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me' (Rom.7:9-11)**
- ✓ **Those who teach law have a 'ministry of death' (2 Cor.3:7)**



- ✓ **God not only provides the ability to discern what is good and what is bad, but also supplies the effective remedy for those who have partaken of the harmful. E.g. healing leaves and herbs**
- ✓ **So too spiritually. E.g. the tree at Marah. *'In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations'* (Rev.22:2)**
- ✓ **So too in this passage, Elisha put flour in the pot and then there was nothing harmful in it**

- ✓ **Flour is a type of Christ. The meal offering was one of the 5 offerings representing Jesus. It and speaks of the perfect life of Jesus who offered Himself for us**
- ✓ **The answer to heresy is to preach Christ. *'Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him'* (Col.2:8-10)**

***'Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, "Give it to the people, that they may eat." But his servant said, "What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?" He said again, "Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: 'They shall eat and have some left over.'"*** So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD'  
**(2 Kings 4:42-44)**

- ✓ **A man came from Baal Shalisha, a journey of considerable distance**
- ✓ **Even in this place of idolatry there was at least one who was faithful to the Lord**
- ✓ **This man brought bread to Elisha as first-fruits**
- ✓ **He would have had no idea that by this deed he was going to contribute towards a remarkable miracle**

- ✓ **Elisha commanded that this small amount of bread be served to 100 men**
- ✓ **God promised not only to provide, but to provide beyond the immediate need. There would be some left over**
- ✓ **Elisha acted in faith, trusting in the promise of God, and saw the promise miraculously fulfilled**
- ✓ **Elisha's servant acted in unbelief and selfishness. He resented his master's generosity, thinking 'we will need this food for ourselves'. And this, after all the miracles he had seen God work through Elisha!**

- ✓ **Jesus is the Bread of Life we share with others. It is the first of the seven 'I am's' in John, each one having reference to a particular need we have – *'I am the Bread of Life'*, i.e. 'I am as necessary for your healthy, spiritual life as bread (food) is for your natural life'**
- ✓ **As we receive from God, so we impart to others: *'Freely you have received, freely give'***



- ✓ **There will always be those who do not have the faith or obedience to give because of selfishness or fear. But we should not be limited by their example**
- ✓ **The one who is faithful in giving out to others will not go short himself, but will be given more opportunities, *'Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom'* (Luke 6:38)**

## Summary

- ✓ **Both these miracles are related to eating. When we feed upon Jesus, we are eating well**
- ✓ **Preaching Jesus is the best defence against false teaching; and He is the only One who can nourish our souls**