

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

#### III. The Latter Era Of The Divided Kingdom, 2 Kings 2:1-27:41

##### F. Individually Thriving Amid Stressful World Apostasy

##### (2 Kings 4:38-44)

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

In recent messages, we have noted that Revelation 3:21 predicts we will face a pre-tribulation rapture mini-Great-Tribulation era, meaning we will live in a stressful world, and current events certainly fit such a state of affairs:

(1) We face the threat of **harm**: the Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton who was defeated by President Donald Trump in the last general election recently told CNN's Christiane Amanpour, "You cannot be civil with a political party that wants to destroy what you stand for, what you care about. That's why I believe, if we are fortunate enough to win back the House and/or the Senate, that's when civility can start again." (Jon Gabriel, "Hillary Clinton wants a war on civility? That'll cost the Democrats, big time," 10/11/2018; azcentral.com; brackets ours)

If a major political party's nominee for president condones a lack of civility until her party regains political clout in the midterm elections, the rule of law and order is at risk, threatening harm to the general public.

(2) We face the threat of **material lack**: Vice President Mike Pence claims China is trying to "interfere in the U. S. midterm elections" to "counter" the President's "tough trade policies against Beijing," that "(b)y one estimate, more than 80 percent of U. S. counties targeted by China voted for President Trump . . . in 2016." (Deb Riechmann and Zeke Miller, "Pence: Russian meddling pales next to China's," Republican-American, October 5, 2018, p. 5A)

If China gets voters to block the President's economic agenda, many may wonder if it will hurt their incomes.

(3) We face the threat of **oppressive apostasy**: Though the Supreme Court has ruled in favor of Jack Phillips' declining "on religious grounds to make a customized cake to celebrate a same-sex couple's 'wedding' . . . the majority opinion . . . merely acknowledges that religious views have a right to be heard, not that they are a fundamental constitutional right that supersedes efforts of government social engineering." ("A Win for Religious Liberty?" Answers, Sept.-Oct., 2018, p. 43-44) Thus, "Christians . . . concerned about the deterioration of religious freedom in the United States" think the Court's decision in the issue still "gives worrisome signs about the future," *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Need: *So we ask, "If we will face a stressful mini-tribulation era, how does God want us believers to thrive in it?!"*

- I. Since Deuteronomy 28:15, 23-24 predicted that one way God would punish Israel for sin was by sending her a famine, and according to Baal theology, a famine meant that Baal was "dead" in the underworld, the 2 Kings 4:38a famine meant God was punishing Israel for Baalism (Z. P. E. B., v. One, p. 432).
- II. However, though Israel's idolaters faced hardships, individual believers who obeyed God saw Him sustain them in the famine in ways that demonstrated His vast superiority over Baal (as follows):
  - A. Though Baal worshipers faced hardships, God *protectively* provided for obedient believers, 2 Kings 4:38b-41:
    1. While Israel's idolaters faced God's punishing hardship of a famine (2 Kings 4:38a), the school of the prophets were occupied with righteously sitting under the teaching of God's prophet Elisha, 2 Kings 4:38b.
    2. Accordingly, God protectively provided for their needs regardless of the famine, 2 Kings 4:38c-41:
      - a. Lacking usual food, Elisha directed that a large cooking pot be set up and that any growing vegetation in the area be put into the pot to cook up a meal for the men, 2 Kings 4:38c.
      - b. One man gathered gourds from a wild vine, not knowing that they were poisonous, and he came and cut up the gourds, adding them to the stew, 2 Kings 4:39.
      - c. When the stew started to be poured out, the prophets discovered that the gourds were dangerous, so they expressed alarm to Elisha, 2 Kings 4:40.
      - d. Elisha called for ground grain and poured it into the stew and had the men eat it, 2 Kings 4:41a. He used meal and not salt like he had in purifying Jericho's water because the stew was already salted, the meal would not harm the stew's flavor and meal was used in some of the temple sacrifices, Leviticus 6:14-15. By this act, Elisha demonstrated that he was trusting the Lord to counter the poison that was in the stew.
      - e. The prophets continued to eat the stew, and no one suffered any harm, 2 Kings 4:41b.
  - B. Though Baal worshipers faced hardships, God *sufficiently* provided for obedient believers, 2 Kings 4:42-44:
    1. While Israel's idolaters faced God's punishing hardship of a famine (2 Kings 4:38a), a devout believer in God brought Elisha his firstfruits of 20 loaves of barley and a little grain, 2 Kings 4:42a.
    2. Accordingly, God sufficiently provided for the donor to minister effectively regardless of the famine:

- a. Elisha directed that this food be set before the school of the prophets to serve as a dinner, 2 Kings 4:42b.
  - b. However, his servant asked how such a small amount could feed 100 men (2 Kings 4:42b-43a), but Elisha said God promised to make the food stretch both to feed them and to leave leftovers, 2 Kings 4:43b.
  - c. The men were served, and like Elisha said, the food filled them up, and they had leftovers, 2 Kings 4:44.
- C. Though Baal worshipers faced hardships, God **supportively** provided for obedient believers, 2 Kings 4:42-44:
1. While Israel's idolaters faced God's punishing hardship of a famine (2 Kings 4:38a), the devout believer in God who gave the firstfruits to Elisha did so in faith in spite of facing significant obstacles:
    - a. First, the donor lived in Baal-shalisha, a town given to Baal worship as evidenced by its name, so he lived as part of a devout minority among apostates who worshiped Baal, 2 Kings 4:42a.
    - b. Second, the donor's firstfruits were given amid apostate obstacles to his worship: (1) God had directed in Numbers 18:1, 12-13 that all firstfruits were to be given to the Levitical priests. (2) However, Jeroboam's syncretism had created a priesthood of non-Levites in the nation Israel (1 Kings 12:31), so the donor could not feasibly get his firstfruits to God's true priests who then ministered in the often enemy Southern Kingdom of Judah, a hurdle against the donor's heeding Scripture precisely! (3) Thus, he had given his firstfruits to the best **alternative** recipient available, to God's prophet Elisha and to his student prophets, trusting God mercifully to approve of these recipients in view of his humanly insurmountable obstacles!
    - c. Third, the famine had depleted the donor's agricultural yield, so though he had too small a gift of cheap barley loaves (Ibid., p. 475) and grain to feed so many men even one meal, he still gave what he had.
  2. Accordingly, God supportively condoned the donor's firstfruits gift in view of the great hardships he faced and made it effective by multiplying it not only to feed all 100 men a dinner, but even to supply leftovers!

***Lesson:*** *When individual believers obeyed God even amid the nation's stressful judgment for its apostasy in its worship of Baal, He protectively guarded the godly even from harm caused by human error and incompetence, He sufficiently met their material needs and He supportively made even their humanly inadequate efforts effective.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) Even amid the mini-Great-Tribulation-era where we will face a stressful world, may we (a) courageously heed Scripture, (b) trusting God (i) protectively to guard us from dangers caused even by human error and incompetence, (ii) sufficiently to meet our needs and also (iii) supportively to make our humanly seemingly inadequate efforts to serve Him nevertheless effective.*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the message . . . )

As an encouragement to heed Scripture and live by faith in God in the mini-Great-Tribulation-era, we note that God has used the Baal-shalisha donor's small gift to Elisha in his era **even for our GREAT benefit today:**

(1) In opposing Baal worship in his era, the devout donor from Baal-shalisha opposed a religious variation of the Babylonian Semiramis cult that will be the base of the "Babylon the Great" idolatry in the future Great Tribulation Period. (Bryce Self, "Semiramis, Queen of Babylon," Idolphn.org; Ibid., Harry Ironside, "Babylonian Religion")

(2) That Semiramis cult had many sacraments, influencing the mystery religions to hold that "sharing a meal with the god is to become a partaker of the divine nature," what led to **transubstantiation** in the Catholic Church that will be part of "Babylon the Great." (Ibid., Ironside; Williston Walker, A Hist. of the Christ. Chch., 1959, p. 90-91)

(3) Then, Elisha's multiplication of the donor's loaves later led Jesus' listeners who saw Him similarly multiply loaves to feed the 5,000 to view Jesus as God's prophet like Elisha had been (cf. John 6:11-14), what fit God's program to get people to believe in Jesus not only as God's Prophet, but also as the Messiah and Savior. (John 20:31)

(4) In addition, **we in our communion service** refer to the **context of Jesus' feeding of the 5,000** to show that He did **not** teach **transubstantiation**, but the **opposite** -- that people in His day were to trust in Him for eternal life instead of relying on ingesting material food like loaves and fishes that supported only temporal life! (John 6:41-63)

(5) Thus, the Baal-shalisha devout donor's stand against Baalism, a variation of the Semiramis cult behind the future "Babylon the Great," that led him to give his firstfruits to Elisha, has by Christ's miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 become a key part of supporting our stand in our communion services against the form of "Babylon the Great" we face today in Roman Catholicism's transubstantiation error! God not only multiplied the Baal-shalisha donor's gift, but He **used** that donation through Christ's earthly ministry **spiritually** to impact **OUR beliefs for OUR blessing!**

One day in heaven, we can meet and thank the Baal-shalisha donor for his stand that ministered even to us!

**May we trust in Christ for salvation! May we heed God even in difficult times to see Him greatly bless and use us in His eternal plan like He has done for the Baal-shalisha donor!**