

A CHILD BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE



ONE of the small cities in the land of Israel was called Shunem. There lived in this city a dear woman who was very kind to one of God's servants. The Bible doesn't tell us the name of this good woman, except that she was a Shunammite. The servant of God to whom she was so kind was Elisha. Elisha had been the servant of the Prophet Elijah, and when Elijah died, God made Elisha a prophet to take his place.

In going from place to place to do the work God give him to do, Elisha and his servant often walked past the house where the Shunammite woman lived. This good woman decided that it would be a very kind thing to ask Elisha to stop and have dinner with them. Elisha must have been very glad, for it is always nice to eat a good meal when one is traveling. The Shunammite woman enjoyed it too, and several times she asked him to stop in to hive something to eat. Elisha loved God, and usually people talk about those whom they love. Well, Elisha must have talked about God while he was eating dinner in this home, for the Shunammite woman found out that he

was one of God's prophets. She mentioned this to her husband and said that she thought it would be a good idea if they furnished a comfortable bedroom for Elisha where he could rest any time he came to visit. You see, she loved God too, and wanted to serve him by doing something for Elisha.

Elisha appreciated this very much, and one day while he was resting in his room in the Shunammite's home it occurred to him that perhaps there was something he could do for her to show how thankful he was for her kindness. He talked it over with his servant, and the servant told him that this good woman didn't have any children, but would like very much to be the mother of a child. Elisha knew that God is able to give children to mothers, and he knew that if he asked God to give this good woman a child God would do so. Then Elisha told the woman that God would give her a child. She could hardly believe it, but God gave her the child just the same. How happy she must have been! God had certainly rewarded her for being so kind to his prophet.

The child was a boy, and when he was old enough he did what he could to help his father. One very hot day he went out in the field where reaping was being done and suddenly he felt a terrible pain in his head. He said, "Oh, my head, my head. Father, my head hurts." His father ran over to him, but by that time the boy had fallen down and was unconscious. The sun was too hot for his little head and it caused what we call a sunstroke.

The father had one of the strong young men pick up the boy and carry him back to the house, and his mother held him in her lap for quite a long time hoping he would get better, but he didn't. He remained unconscious, and after several hours he died. Yes, that dear boy died right in his mother's arms. Wasn't that sad? Of course, the poor mother was heartbroken. It seemed so strange that God would give her a boy and then allow him to die.

But the Shunammite woman did just the right thing. She thought of Elisha, the man of God. If God would give her a son because Elisha asked him to, perhaps God would make her boy alive again if Elisha

prayed to him about it. Perhaps you think that she sent someone to get Elisha, don't you?

But she didn't.

It was too important to trust anyone else to take such a message to God's prophet, so she went herself. She had to travel all the way to Mount Carmel to find Elisha, but she finally found him, and she insisted that he return with her to her home and to the dead child. Elisha told his servant to hurry back to the mother's home and asked him to lay his staff across the face of the dead child. A staff is a very long cane, which the people used in those days as walking sticks. The servant came back and met the prophet and the Shunammite woman before they arrived at her home and reported that the child was still dead. My, how badly that poor mother must have felt!

But Elisha had great faith in God!

Arriving at the mother's home, he went upstairs to his room where the mother had laid the child on his bed. He worked over the child, and prayed to God for help. After awhile the child's body became warm. Then the boy sneezed seven times and sat up on the bed and was just as much alive as ever. Elisha sent for the mother to come upstairs and see her boy. My, how happy she must have been!

Now this is a wonderful story of how God's power brought a little boy back to life. But it should mean more to us than a story. It is a true story, of course. But the best story of all is that God will, by and by, use his power to make all the dead people alive. Elisha wasn't able to make that dear boy alive again unless God helped him, but when God helps people, wonderful things can be done.

The next time you learn that someone has died, just remember this story of the Shunammite boy who died. Remember that God's power made that boy alive again. And the most important thing of all to remember is that God has promised to make everybody alive. Yes, all who have ever died are to live again.

QUESTIONS

- Who was Elisha, and how did he become the friend of a family in the city of Shunem?
- What caused the Shunammite's son to die, and how was he made alive again?
- What is the best story of all that God has told us in the Bible?

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