

March 15 — SUBJECT: Matter

DEAR FRIENDS: Mary Baker Eddy gave her students 26 subjects for weekly Bible Lessons, to be covered twice yearly. Flowing through the year in her order of the subjects, we hereby present fresh views of each one by outstanding Christian Scientists. In this way, we hope to partake with you of new unfoldments of her infinite revelation.

Our selection this week is from: TALKS GIVEN BY JOHN W. DOORLY ON THE SCIENCE OF THE BIBLE — VOLUME SIX. [Click here](#) for a brief biography on our contributing authors.

The Shunammite Woman Bears a Son: Life as Spirit

Now we come to the tone of Life as Spirit, which we have summarized like this: The consecration of Life enables woman to give birth through the grace of the Spirit.

In Life as Mind the story concerned a widow woman, but now in Life as Spirit we come to the story of the “greatwoman” of Shunem, who gave birth to a son. Remember that it is all symbolic. The prophets who wrote this were thinking of Israel; they longed for Israel to manifest that womanhood which would give birth to the Christ idea. The first step for any of us is to be the widow woman — to be widowed, in thought, from materiality, and to have that great overpowering longing for heavenly inspiration, which prepares thought to receive it. Then we can become the woman who gives birth.

And it fell on a day that Elisha passed to Shunem where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.” When the widow, the good human belief, empties her vessels of thought, and inspiration comes to her, then she becomes a “great woman,” who welcomes the spiritual idea. “And she said unto 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” (II Kings 4: 8-10). When you are “great” in womanhood then you see the need of making provision for the things of Spirit.

And it fell on a day that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there. And he said to Gehazi his servant, call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. And he said unto him, say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people” (II Kings 4:11-13). She wasn’t seeking in matter. The developing spiritual idea was all she cared about.

“And he said, what then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. And he said, call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And he said, about this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid” (II Kings 4:14-16). Many spiritually minded men and women come to the point where they don’t see how the spiritual will develop to them, or how they will be able to give birth to it. Someone who is more advanced than they are may say to them, “The idea will soon be developing to you in all kinds of ways,” and they often will not believe **it**, but **it** always comes about.

“And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life” (II Kings 4:17). That ends the tone of Life as Spirit, and it shows how the consecration of Life enables woman to give birth through the grace of the Spirit. Because of the willingness to have empty vessels, the widowed sense gives way to womanhood and motherhood.

The prophets were thinking of Israel giving birth to the spiritual idea, but think what the symbol means to us today. The spiritual idea is created in our thought through true desire, and then we come to the point where we make provision for it to come in and abide with us, and so the idea begins to be born.

The Shunammite Goes to Elisha for Help: Life as Soul (1)

So we come to the tone of *Life as Soul*: Life as Soul resurrects the spiritual idea, and satisfies all demands. When we have given birth to the Christ-idea in Science, it often seems to meet attacks of animal magnetism so vicious that it looks like being destroyed. But Life as Soul will always resurrect the idea, just as it did in Israel in spite of the rottenness of government and religion.

And when the child was grown, it fell on a day that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, my head, my head. And he said to a lad, carry him to his mother” — the father knew that a sense of motherhood was needed. “And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out” (II Kings 4: 18-21) — “bed” is used in the Bible as a symbol of a state of thought, and so the Shunammite woman was identifying her idea with the highest she knew.

“And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again. And he said, wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? It is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, it shall be well. Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee. So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child? And she answered, it is well. And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away” — Gehazi seems to represent a more humanized concept of the spiritual idea, which often seems to try to prevent us from gaining the idea in its purity. “And the man of God said, let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me. Then she said, did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, do not deceive me? Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child. And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her” (II Kings 4: 22-30).

The Shunammite woman wasn't going to be satisfied with anything but the idea in its purity. The servant, a more humanized concept of the spiritual idea, tried to intervene, but she was determined to get to the man of God, and when she did, she said, “I will not leave thee.” We

all stand or fall according to our individual understanding of Principle, and that understanding is all we need. We should never be content until we base ourselves on Principle alone.

Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Child: Life as Soul (2)

“And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, the child is not awaked. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord” (II Kings 4:31-33). Elisha used Soul-sense, which is true prayer.

“And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm” (II Kings 4:34). Elisha identified the child exactly with Principle. He himself had demonstrated identity, and he knew that the great fact of identity whereby idea is identified with Principle in ever respect, would operate to resurrect the child **and** bring his immortality to light.

Then he returned, and “walked in the house to and fro;”— when we are trying to work out some problem alone with God, we have all of us “walked in the house to and fro,” trying to see the specific spiritual answer—“and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times,”—the child was brought into complete identity with the divine,—“and the child opened his eyes”—thought was resurrected. “And he called Gehazi, and said, call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out” (II Kings 4: 35-37). That translation and resurrection goes on in our experience all the time, if we are growing spiritually. “Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.” We’ve got to have that sense of Elias, which reveals God to us through some sense of the Word, the Christ, Christianity, and Science, and when we’ve got it, we must stick to it, and not be put off by anything.

Next time we shall finish the tone of Life as Soul, but let’s look for a moment at the unfoldment, which lies ahead. We shall be seeing how Elias, prophecy, constantly brings about translation through three degrees. It eradicates the physical, shows that the moral is only a transitional state, and establishes the spiritual. This fourth thousand-year period illustrates Principle, and lays a scientific foundation for the full appearing of the Christ-idea. Eventually we shall see how Jesus’ individual demonstration of the Christ-idea is the outstanding feature of the fifth thousand years of the Scriptural record. After that, there follows the development of Christianity, and today we know Christianity as Science, and we are touching the hem of Science itself. As we touch Science, the whole picture becomes subjective, and we no longer struggle to understand Principle through the ideas which reveal it, but we begin through our subjective understanding of principle to speak with “authority,” and not only to understand but also to demonstrate the ideas of Principle.

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