



[2 Kings 4:35](#)

(35) He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

New King James Version

Elisha again stretches himself out on the child, and this time something happens: The child sneezes seven times and opens his eyes! What a strange way to resurrect the dead! Its very peculiarity demands a spiritual parallel, and indeed it has one.

No medical rationale sufficiently explains the boy's sneezing. One commentator writes that, because the child's illness centered in his head, the seven sneezes relieved the pressure that had caused his death. Wanting a rational explanation, other commentators insist the Septuagint, which lacks this clause about the child sneezing, is correct. Yet others declare that the word should be "breathed" and Elisha is the subject (for example, the Revised English Bible reads, ". . . he [Elisha] breathed into him seven times")! The last two "solutions" have very little textual support.

These rationalists fail to recognize that [miracles](#) are by nature irrational! The child's sneezes, therefore, are not as medically important as they are spiritually significant. [God](#) is more interested in our grasping the lesson in this "parable" than He is in explaining how He worked the boy's resurrection. The seven sneezes are the key to the entire story! They are spiritual therapy!

What is a sneeze? *Webster's Dictionary* defines it as "a sudden violent spasmodic audible expiration of breath through the nose and mouth especially as a reflex act." This last phrase shows that most sneezes occur as a reaction to an irritant of some sort: dust, dander, allergen, etc. The respiratory system convulses, and a 240-mph blast of air attempts to dislodge and expel the offending particle.

Does sneezing have a spiritual counterpart? Yes! The act of [repentance](#) is the part we

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for 2 Kings 4:35 (<http://www.theberean.org>) play in clearing ourselves of irritants—sins—that enter our lives. Through repentance, we expel everything that is foreign to God's way of life. Notice Paul's description of repentance in [II Corinthians 7:10-11](#):

For godly sorrow produces repentance to [salvation](#), not to be regretted. . . .
For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

In the analogy of reviving a body to life, sneezing is a perfect picture of the individual Christian's repentance!

One other detail remains: The child sneezed *seven* times. The number seven—used multiple times in the Bible—is notable for signifying completion, totality, perfection. The [book of Revelation](#) contains numerous groups of sevens: lampstands, stars, angels, churches, spirits, eyes, seals, trumpets, plagues, bowls, thunders, heads, crowns, mountains and kings. Solomon uses the number seven to show a complete list of things God hates ([Proverbs 6:16-19](#)). Sacrifices are often in groups of seven ([Leviticus 23:18](#); [I Chronicles 15:26](#)). Scripture includes numerous other references to seven.

That the child sneezed seven times is an illustration of complete repentance. Just as Elisha's part takes his complete exertion, so must the child put his all into the cure. One or two sneezes are not enough to rid him completely of his illness; he must sneeze until it is completely gone. Then, completely restored to his former health, he can live a new life without fear of relapse. Back in the embrace of his mother, he can go out and be a witness of God's [mercy](#) and power ([II Kings 4:36-37](#); [8:5](#)).

The spiritual parallels are obvious. [David](#) cries out to God in his [prayer](#) of repentance:

Wash me *thoroughly* from my iniquity. . . . *Purge* me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. . . . *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to you. . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. ([Psalm 51:2](#), 7, 13, 17-18)

This is the kind of repentance God seeks from us now. The church has **not** been scattered because of righteousness! God's displeasure with our deplorable spiritual

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condition has resulted in His violent expulsion of *us* ([Revelation 3:16](#); see [Leviticus 26:33](#); [Daniel 12:7](#); [Amos 9:9-10](#)). To return to His good graces—torevive God's church—we have to expel the [sin](#) from ourselves completely, totally, permanently, so we can be suitable representatives of Him before [the world](#). Only then will we be fit to [preach the gospel](#) with any power to the world.

When that time will come, only God knows, and He will open the door to get it done. In the meantime, our job is to become clean by the [grace](#) of God, the blood of Christ, and the scouring effect of sincere and deep repentance. Revelation, an end-time book, contains one-third of the Bible's occurrences of "repent" (New King James version), and this should convince us how important repentance is at this time. Christ tells the [Laodiceans](#), "Therefore be zealous [earnest, eager] and repent" ([Revelation 3:19](#)).

This is the lesson of Elisha's resurrection of the Shunammite woman's son: God's true ministers and the members must work together to produce repentance, putting God's church back on the road to His Kingdom and eternal life!

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Elisha and the Shunammite Woman, Part II: Serving God's Children](#)

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