

Lesson Nine
The Life and Times of Elijah and Elisha
2 Kings 7 - 8

1. The Siege Relieved. 7:1-20.
 1. The siege of Samaria had brought the city to dire straits. 6:25-29.
 1. Chapter 6 concludes with the king's messenger (or the king himself) saying that he could no longer wait on the Lord.
 2. Chapter 7 begins with Elisha's response - a prophecy that a day later the price of commodities would fall well below the normal price.
 1. The prophecy was more effective because no crops could have been grown in time to restore supplies.
 2. The prophecy was so astonishing that one of the king's entourage denied its possibility even if Jehovah opened up the windows of heaven and it rained wheat.
 3. Elisha responded with another prophecy - the doubter would see it but would not eat of it.
 2. Four lepers, caught up in the effects of the siege, decided to surrender to the enemy - the worst that could happen was that they would die by the enemy's hand instead of starving from the siege. vv. 3-4.
 1. Little did they know what awaited them. vv. 5-8.
 2. During the night Jehovah had made the Syrians hear the sound of chariots, horses, and a great army.
 3. The Syrians, thinking that Israel had hired the Kings of the Hittites and Egyptians to fight, had fled, leaving behind all of their provisions, including even their tents and horses.
 4. The four lepers ate their fill and stowed some away for the proverbial "rainy day."
 5. The lepers then realized that they were not doing right by keeping this good news to themselves and they made their way to the palace of the king to proclaim their marvelous discovery. vv. 9-11.
 1. "We do not well."
 2. Others who do not well.
 1. When a man has wealth and keeps it to himself he suffers from moral deterioration.

1. We have homes in which to live; millions are homeless.
2. We have food in abundance to eat; millions are hungry, if not starving.
3. We have clothing, warmth, and comfort; millions lack these elementary necessities of life.
4. It is the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus all over again. Luke 16:19-31.
 1. Can we enjoy our luxuries when we know the misery of others; do we hold our peace?
 2. So Ruskin wrote in *Unto This Last*, in 1906, "Consider whether, even supposing it guiltless, luxury would be desired by any of us, if we saw clearly at our sides the suffering which accompanies it in the world. . . . The cruelest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfolded."
5. The response of the normal human heart is surely that of the lepers, in gratitude for God's deliverance.
6. It will mean not only the salvation of the lives of others, but of our own.
2. When a man is educated and uses it for personal and selfish ends rather than as an instrument for service to others, his education becomes a curse to himself and to others, rather than a blessing.
3. Matthew Arnold wrote in *Culture and Anarchy* way back in 1898, "The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection."
4. Anywhere and everywhere the possession of advantage, of the means of happiness, imposes the obligation to share it with those who lack it.
5. This is one of the greatest missionary parables to be found in Scripture.
 1. For all of us this is a day of glad tidings of great joy which are not for us only but for all people.
 2. What would life mean to us if we had no knowledge of Christ or hope for the forgiveness of sin, no knowledge of any life beyond the limits of our present existence?
 3. We are living on those riches everyday, and do we hold our

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peace?

4. If we have received this unspeakable gift, the unsearchable riches of Christ, into our own lives, then it must be upon pain of moral deterioration if we do not have the passion to make this truth prevail; what was meant for our salvation becomes the means of our condemnation.
 5. This is the innermost meaning of the words of Paul, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" 1 Cor. 9:16.
3. The King's doubt and its removal. vv. 12-16.
 1. The King's reaction was that the Syrians had hid themselves in a field to lay a trap for the hungry Israelites when they came out to get food.
 2. A servant suggested that a few (apparently expendable) be sent out to see if that were the case.
 3. The messengers found it to be as the lepers had said, and went back and told the king.
 4. Elisha's first prophecy was fulfilled.
 5. Elisha's second prophecy fulfilled. vv. 17-20.
 1. In an apparent attempt to establish some semblance of order as hungry people rushed to obtain food and to control prices at the gate, the King asked the lord who had doubted that Elisha's prophecy could be fulfilled if Jehovah himself opened the windows of heaven, to have charge of the gate.
 2. He saw the bounty, but he did not eat of it because the people trod upon him in the gate.
 2. The Shunammite Woman and Her Land. 8:1-6.
 1. Famines were frequent in the Holy Land.
 1. From the early days of Jacob, whose sons came to Egypt (Gen. 41:56 - 42:2), this was one of the most feared scourges that befell God's people.
 1. Palestine was a dry and thirsty land.
 2. If rain was withheld, famine followed quickly.
 3. Isaac migrated to the land of the Philistines in a time of famine. Gen. 26:1.
 4. This trek toward Egypt was evidently the regular movement at such times. Gen. 12:10; 43:2; 46:6.
 2. It may have been part of the divine education of God's people that lack of material riches would rouse within them the hunger and thirst for the living

God.

3. Unable to satisfy the needs of the body, they were driven to find their satisfaction in the plenitude of the mercies of God. (Compare with our Great Depression.)
2. One has only to contrast the history of ancient peoples who lived in freedom from want with the history of God's people, who were never free from it, to understand the connection between adversity and character.
 1. A visitor to New England, remarking on its hard and stony soil, is reported to have asked, "What can you raise here?" To which the proud reply came, "Here we raise men!"
 2. Social workers have observed that the moral diseases that afflict and degrade our social order often stem from the homes of the idle rich.
 3. A prosecutor for the Fort Bend District Attorney's office is reported to have said that there are more drug cases from Cinco Ranch High School than from all of the other schools in the district.
3. Famine and faith are clearly joined in the scripture.
 1. It was a famine that caused the prodigal son to come to himself and resolve to return to his father.
 2. We who have never known what famine means, have never known an hour when we did not have enough to eat or when the next meal was not ready, are reminded of the forgotten mercies of God.
 3. Every day in our lives the prayer has been answered, "Give us this day our daily bread."
 4. As we discussed above, we should also be mindful of those for whom it has not been answered; put differently, we should be mindful of those for whom God intends for us to be part of the answer.
4. Elisha's action here also teaches us to individualize our concerns.
 1. It was not the Shunammite woman who sought out Elisha, but Elisha who was mindful of the Shunammite woman.
 2. Elisha was not so preoccupied with great affairs of public importance that he overlooked the personal welfare of one individual and household.
 3. This is the weakness of many good intentions today.
 1. Too often it is abstract, vague, a generalized sentiment of benevolence.
 2. It is not focused on a particular individual.
 3. Genuine affection can always point to "a certain man" (Luke 10:30), and thus holds us to a concrete and definite form of service to

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individuals.

5. The conclusion of the story also merits mention.
 1. The appeal of the woman that her property be restored to her was granted because of Elisha's interest in her.
 2. It is a good thing for one to have personal relations with prophets, ancient or "modern."
 3. Here, the woman's good deed established a good relationship that had a good result in her life.
6. Special note related to Gehazi.
 1. When the Shunammite woman made her request to the King it was just at the time that the King was listening to Gehazi recount the great works of Elisha, one of which was the raising of the Shunammite woman's son.
 2. Some conclude that this account must be out of chronological order since it is recounted after the healing of Naaman and Gehazi's condemnation because of his dishonesty to bear Naaman's leprosy.
 3. It is, of course, true that not all Old Testament events are chronologically recorded.
 1. Sometimes it is not the writers purpose, as here, to record events in historical order.
 2. Here the writer is recounting some of the great events of Elisha's career to demonstrate that Elisha's words and works were as great as those of Elijah.
 3. If it is in chronological order, then Gehazi is at court with leprosy after he had been dismissed as Elisha's servant.
 4. We need not conclude, however, that the order is not chronological.
 1. Although lepers were banned from the cities, not all intercourse with them was prohibited, especially under peculiar circumstances.
 2. On the other hand, it was evidently the period when the authority of the prophet with the king was at its highest, and hence either after the capture of the Syrians in Samaria (2 Kings 6:21), or after Elisha's prediction of the relief of Samaria, and the death of the disbelieving "lord."
 3. This would best accord with the present narrative.
 4. In any case, the appearance of the woman with her son during Gehazi's conversation would not only confirm its truth, but naturally augment the interest of the king in her complaint.

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3. Elisha and Hazael. 8:7-15.

1. This passage contains an explanation of the illness and death of Ben-hadad king of Syria.

1. This narrative demonstrates that the name and work of Elisha were known not only in Israel, but beyond it, even in hostile Syria.

2. When the King learned that Elisha had come to Damascus, he dispatched Hazael with gifts to inquire of Elisha whether the King would live or die from the illness that he had. v.9.

1. The gifts were the manner of the time - one always approached a Seer with gifts.

2. Then, as now, true men of God cannot be bought.

3. The dictum "Every man has his price" never applies to a man of God; if it applies he is not a man of God.

4. Forty camels laden with gifts could not induce a true man of God to speak that which he did not believe to be true.

5. The true man of God may not be brilliant or conspicuous, but he must be incorruptible.

3. When Hazael inquired of Elisha whether the King would recover from his illness, Elisha responded that he would certainly recover, but added that the Lord had shown him that he would certainly die. v.10.

1. Elisha then fixed his gaze on Hazael until Hazael was ashamed.

2. Elisha wept, and Hazael inquired as to the cause. v. 11.

3. Elisha recited a list of evils that Hazael would inflict on Israel. v.12.

4. Hazael responded that he was of too low station in life to accomplish such mighty deeds, but Elisha responded that God had shown him that Hazael would be king over Syria. vv. 13.

4. Hazael then returned and told the king what Elisha had said, but omitted Elisha's second statement that the king would certainly die. v. 14.

1. The next day, Hazael made Elisha's second prophecy come true - he killed the king.

2. Verse 15 closes with Hazael becoming King of Syria, and unusual event because Hazael was not in the lineage of the kings of Syria.

4. History of reigns. 8:16-29.

1. Jehoram of Judah. 8:16-24. (*cf.* 2 Chronicles 21:1-20.)

1. Jehoram's reign was evil; his wife was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

2. As we will see in v. 27, Ahaziah's reign was also evil; he was son-in-law to the house of Ahab, his mother's name was Athaliah who was the granddaughter of Omri.
3. Clearly, Ahab's wickedness did not end with his life.
 1. Wickedness rarely ends with the death of a wicked man.
 2. The infection is transmitted unto coming generations; the evil that stemmed from Ahab continued to poison the life of both kingdoms for years to come.
4. However, note the words in v. 19 - the light flickered low in those days but it never went out.
 1. Darkness enveloped the destinies of Israel and only the providence of God kept that light alive.
 2. The promise holds good for every people, for every soul that God has created.
 3. There is always a light in the heart of any nation, however degraded; in the soul of any, man, however depraved.
 4. Always there is the spark of light that awaits only the rightly directed breath of God to be fanned into a flame of life.
2. Ahaziah of Judah. 8:25-29.
 1. Ahaziah and Jehoram went to war with Hazael king of Syria.
 2. Jehoram was wounded and went to Jezreel to recuperate.
 3. It appears that the stage is set for that which Elisha prophesied concerning Hazael's inflicting evil on Israel to come true.