

The God who both restores and judges (2 Kings 8:1-15 & Luke 19:41-44)

24th September 2023

2 Kings 8:1-15

The Shunammite's Land Restored

8 Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, "Go away with your family and stay for a while wherever you can, because the LORD has decreed a famine in the land that will last seven years." ² The woman proceeded to do as the man of God said. She and her family went away and stayed in the land of the Philistines seven years.

³ At the end of the seven years she came back from the land of the Philistines and went to appeal to the king for her house and land. ⁴ The king was talking to Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, and had said, "Tell me about all the great things Elisha has done." ⁵ Just as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, the woman whose son Elisha had brought back to life came to appeal to the king for her house and land.

Gehazi said, "This is the woman, my lord the king, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life." ⁶ The king asked the woman about it, and she told him.

Then he assigned an official to her case and said to him, "Give back everything that belonged to her, including all the income from her land from the day she left the country until now."

Hazael Murders Ben-Hadad

⁷ Elisha went to Damascus, and Ben-Hadad king of Aram was ill. When the king was told, "The man of God has come all the way up here," ⁸ he said to

Hazael, "Take a gift with you and go to meet the man of God. Consult the LORD through him; ask him, 'Will I recover from this illness?'"

⁹ Hazael went to meet Elisha, taking with him as a gift forty camel-loads of all the finest wares of Damascus. He went in and stood before him, and said, "Your son Ben-Hadad king of Aram has sent me to ask, 'Will I recover from this illness?'"

¹⁰ Elisha answered, "Go and say to him, 'You will certainly recover.' Nevertheless, the LORD has revealed to me that he will in fact die." ¹¹ He stared at him with a fixed gaze until Hazael was embarrassed. Then the man of God began to weep.

¹² "Why is my lord weeping?" asked Hazael.

"Because I know the harm you will do to the Israelites," he answered. "You will set fire to their fortified places, kill their young men with the sword, dash their little children to the ground, and rip open their pregnant women."

¹³ Hazael said, "How could your servant, a mere dog, accomplish such a feat?"

"The LORD has shown me that you will become king of Aram," answered Elisha.

¹⁴ Then Hazael left Elisha and returned to his master. When Ben-Hadad asked, "What did Elisha say to you?" Hazael replied, "He told me that you would certainly recover." ¹⁵ But the next day he took a thick cloth, soaked it in water and spread it over the king's face, so that he died. Then Hazael succeeded him as king.

Luke 19:41-44

⁴¹ As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

The God who both Restores and Judges

Please have your **Bibles opened** at **2 Kings 8**

You have an **outline**. Let me **pray**...

Intro/Context

In our **two stories** from 2 Kings 8:1-15

We have a **stark contrast**

The 1st story gives restoration to a woman who has been faithful to the Lord and has previously shown kindness to God's prophet Elisha.

The 2nd story gives judgment to a nation that has been unfaithful to God.

Quite a contrast.

Restoration for the Faithful (2 Kings 8:1-6)

Let's look at the 1st story – restoration for the faithful

We pick up the story in **verse 1** of chapter 8

[SLIDE – Elisha and the Shunammite]

The prophet **Elisha dealt kindly with a woman** whom he'd had previously helped. We came across this woman back in chapter 4 – when the woman from Shunem – a Shunammite and her husband – **showed Elisha great kindness** - they built a penthouse flat for Elisha - so he could sleep over when he passed by their town on his ministry travels.

In return **Elisha promised the Shunammite woman she would have a son even though she was barren and her husband was old**. The woman did have a son but when he grew to be a boy – he died – but praise God, Elisha raised the boy back to life with some unorthodox CPR.

Now sometime later – there's a **famine**.

So v1 – **Elisha kindly advises the Shunammite woman to get away from the famine in the land of Israel and spend time in the land of the Philistines**. 7 years in fact!

It's clear the woman is rewarded by Elisha for her faithfulness to God and for the kindness she showed to the prophet Elisha.

Application

How faithful are we to God?

Do we apply the same standards of faithfulness in our Christian activities that we expect in other areas of our lives?

If our car starts once every three goes, would we say it was reliable?

If we have a sick day from work once a week – would our boss say we were a loyal employee?

If our fridge stops working for a day or two every now and again – **would we say “oh well, it works most of the time?”**

If our hot water came out icy cold two mornings a week – **would we say that was a dependable water heater?**

If we pay our mortgage 10 months out of 12 – **will the bank be okay with that and say we’re a good customer?**

If we worship God one Sunday a month - or - we worship God only when we’re on the roster – **would be called a faithful Christian?**

Or if we pray only when we are in deep deep trouble? **Is that being faithful to God?**

Or if we pull the Bible off the bookshelf and it’s dusty – **is that an indication of a faithful spiritual life?**

You see - we don’t HAVE TO come to church and worship God to be seen as a Christian – we don’t HAVE TO pray to be seen as a Christian – we don’t HAVE TO read our Bible to be seen as a Christian – **WE DON’T HAVE TO DO those things – WE should WANT to!**

Don’t we - expect **faithfulness** and **reliability** from the people we know and from the things we use – don’t we?

God expects faithfulness from us!

Perhaps the problem is sometimes we see our Christian activity as though we are **volunteers** rather than as a **servant of our master**. And as a servant to our master

– we have a duty and responsibility to serve Him faithfully – not serve Him willy nilly.

In our story – the Shunammite woman was rewarded **for her consistent faithfulness and kindness**

[SLIDE – King and Gehazi and Shunammite]

See v3 – when she returns to Israel after 7 years in the land of the Philistines – she **appeals to the King for her house and land back.**

Now it just so happens that when she makes her appeal to the King

The **King is talking to Elisha’s servant Gehazi** – vv4-5– and **Gehazi is telling the King all the great things Elisha has done** – and just at the point where Gehazi is telling the King how Elisha raised the Shunammite woman’s son from the dead – **who should turn up but the Shunammite woman herself!**

Gehazi can’t believe it – *“This is the woman I was telling you about – here she is!”*

Because the King heard such amazing things about Elisha - and – because the king no doubt heard how the woman had shown great kindness – the **King looks**

favourably on the Shunammite woman – v6 – and says *“Give her back everything that belonged to her, including all the income from her land from the day she left the country until now!”* That’s amazing isn’t it!

Application

Some lessons here!

1st lesson - God arranged for the woman to turn up just at the point that the King and Gehazi were talking about her! **That’s no coincidence!** With God there are no coincidences – just God-incidents!

God is sovereign in ALL things.

His timing is perfect.

I'm sure we have all had times in our lives where – just at the right time – **God intervenes** and sends a person or circumstance – just when we needed it!

2nd lesson – There is a reward for showing kindness – just like the **woman** is rewarded for her kindness.

Jesus talks about this in Matthew 25 – He says when we show kindness and help others – **it's like we are doing it for Jesus Himself** – because we are shining the light and love of Jesus into other people's lives – and when they see Jesus' love from us – **they may well come to trust in Jesus too** – and Jesus also says – **we will be seen by Jesus - as good and faithful servants!**

Not only that – **if we have the right motive for helping others and showing kindness** – (that is - not so - we look good in front of others - but - so that - we point others to Jesus) – then Jesus says **we will be rewarded** (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18 and Matthew 16:27).

As Hebrews 6:10 reminds us: - ***God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them***

3rd lesson – the **Shunammite woman** listened and obeyed God's words through Elisha when she was told to leave Israel and go to the land of the Philistines for 7 years – **she obeyed!**

We too must obey God's Word – without doubting – without questioning – even if we don't fully understand – even if we don't know what lies ahead.

4th lesson – the Shunammite woman's property and land are restored – we'd be happy with that wouldn't we? But there's more – she also gets the last 7 years income she missed out on. That's incredible restoration isn't it.?

And we also have an incredible restoration – we are sinful and fall short of God's standards (Rom 3:23) – and we deserve punishment for our sins. But when we come to put our faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. We become a new creation (2 Cor 5:17) – we are reconciled to God and He forgives our sins and does not hold them against us anymore (2 Cor 5:18-19). And even though we must die – we are restored to eternal life (John 3:16) - and we have a Heavenly home to look forward too!

That's an incredible restoration, isn't it?

But let's not get too carried away about how it's OUR faithfulness and good works - that gets us there – remember - it's only possible - because of God's grace in the first place – God's undeserved favour on us by sending His Son to die for us– and only possible by God giving us faith to believe in Jesus – it's ALL His work – our faith is the response to His grace – not the means - for getting to Heaven.

5th lesson – the King of Israel was clearly impressed with the great things that he heard that Elisha had done. In the same way, many people in Jesus' time were impressed with what Jesus said and taught - and impressed by the miracles He

performed – but it's not enough to be impressed – there has to be a commitment to believe and follow Jesus!

Judgment on the Unfaithful (2 Kings 8:7-15 and Luke 19:41-44)

Now the 2nd story – **judgment on the unfaithful** – that's verses 7 to 15.

Elisha goes up to **Damascus in Aram** (modern day Syria)

We're not told why Elisha goes to the Gentile country of Aram– but remember God is sovereign and it's all part of His plan.

[SLIDE – MAP]

[Explain Map]

[SLIDE – Ben Hadad and Hazael]

Vv7-8 – King Ben Hadad (II) of Aram is ill and when he **hears about Elisha's visit** - he sends his offsider Hazael with a gift to ask the Lord through Elisha **whether he will recover from his illness?**

[SLIDE – Hazael and Elisha]

Hazael goes to Elisha with a pretty humongous gift - **40 camel loads of Damascus' finest wares** – v9 – and Hazael asks Elisha - if **his master Ben Hadad will recover from his illness**

The **gift** is meant to encourage Elisha's God - to give a **favourable outcome** and cure Ben Hadad's illness.

Remember, Hazael is coming from a land where they worship false gods and they have the worship view that their gods have to be “bought” and “manipulated”.

Whereas the one true God – cannot be bribed, bought or manipulated!

V10 – Elisha’s answer is a classic - “*Go and say to him, ‘You will certainly recover. Nevertheless, the LORD has revealed to me that he will in fact die.’*”

Elisha’s answer to the King’s question is both - YES and NO.

The Answer is YES: if left to normal circumstances of healing, the King would recover from his illness;

And the **Answer is NO:** because Elisha at that moment has a vision of what Hazael will do to his King and what Hazael will do to Israel.

What we need to realize is that way back in 1 Kings 19:15 – Elisha’s mentor – the Prophet Elijah – had been told by God to do three things: 1) **anoint Hazael as King of Aram;** - 2) **anoint Jehu as King of Israel** (which we’ll see in chapter 9) and - 3) **anoint Elisha as his successor.**

So, **God has already ordained that Hazael will be King of Aram!**

So here in v11 – we have this incredible moment where Elisha has a good long stare at Hazael – and at that moment - Elisha has a glimpse from God of what Hazael will do when he is King.

Hazael will be God's instrument of judgment on the nation of Israel for their continual disobedience of God and their neglect in following God's rules and instead worshipping false gods!

V12 – Elisha sees that Hazael's army will do great and terrible harm to Israel.

Elisha can't handle this terrible vision and he weeps!

It's an awkward and uncomfortable moment for Hazael

Hazael tries to play it down in v13 – saying he is a servant and a mere dog – and couldn't possibly do this?

But Elisha says that the Lord has shown him that Hazael will become king of Aram.

And God's Word never fails!

Sure, enough v14 – Hazael returned to his master Ben Hadad – and told him that Elisha said he would certainly recover from his illness. Which would have been true had Hazael not taken the action mentioned in v15

The next day – v15 – **Hazael smothered Ben Hadad – and **Hazael became King of Aram.****

Application

A few lessons we can learn from this story too:

1st lesson – God's knows all things. Just like he foreknew the Shunammite woman would come to the King at just the right time – He also foreknew that Hazael would be king of Aram and that Hazael would kill King Ben Hadad – and he foreknows what Hazael will do to Israel.

2nd lesson – **before we give God a hard time and say he’s a cruel God in allowing Hazael to punish Israel.** Ezekiel 33:11 says – *God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather that they turn from their ways and live. God wants the people of Israel to turn from their evil ways and not die!*

That’s the same message in the New Testament – 2 Peter 3:9 says – *God does not want anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.*

So, the lesson is – **REPENT or REGRET it!**

You see - God balances **His need for judgment upon sin** with **His desire to show grace and mercy as people repent!**

3rd lesson – we all have an illness we suffer from - **a spiritual illness – our sin and rebellion against God** – which causes death. The only way we can recover from that illness – **is to take the cure** – the cure that Jesus gives on the cross – by dying for our sins to be forgiven. **Without believing in Jesus – there’s no cure for our illness** – and we die separated from God forever!

4th lesson – **Elisha weeps when he sees the devastation** Hazael will do to Israel. There’s a similar thing happening in our NT passage from Luke 19:41-44 – It’s the very first Palm Sunday – Jesus rides into Jerusalem – greeted by an ecstatic crowd cheering Him on as King – things don’t get much better than this – Here is God’s Promised Saviour and Messiah – but little do they know – less than a week later –

their cheers of “*Hosanna – Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*” – will change to cries of “*Crucify Him! Crucify Him*”

And just like in the story of Elisha – there’s a poignant moment in v41 – where Jesus **weeps** over the city of Jerusalem. And just like Elisha – Jesus too – sees a **vision of a terrible event ahead** – about 40 years after Jesus’ time – in 70AD.

Jesus sees these events clearly – see v43-44 – **Israel’s enemy** (the Romans this time not Arameans) **will surround their city – the whole of Jerusalem will be razed to the ground!**

No wonder **Jesus weeps!**

And like Elisha – **Jesus weeps** – because it’s **so unnecessary** – as Jesus says in v42! You see - many of the people of Israel in Elisha’s time - and - many of the people of Israel in Jesus’ time - were **spiritually blind** – and refused to see what is required.

All they need to do is trust and obey in God. All they need to do is believe in Jesus – and this judgment would be avoided!

It’s sad, isn’t it? **That’s why there are tears!**

Our Response (Tears?)

Which brings us to **our response** this morning!

[SLIDE – Our Response (Tears?)]

We’re **not** living in **Israel**

We’re living in **Australia!**

But it’s the **same situation**

Many many people – **not** following **God’s way** but **their own way.**

Many many people – **not following God's rules but ignoring them – or changing God's rules to suit their own needs**

Many many people – **who need to repent and say sorry to God for their sin and rebellion – and many many people who need to put their faith in Jesus' death on the cross.**

But they don't want to know.

It's sad isn't?

But do we shed a tear for them – like Elisha and Jesus did?

Or have we decided it's their problem – not ours?

(pause)

Well - it is our problem too!

It's our duty and responsibility - *to go and make disciples and teach them about Jesus* (Matthew 28:16-20)

That's what motivated the early church to tell people about Jesus – **in whatever form that took**

So, I'd like to leave us with these two prayers as our response – they're both prayers from the Apostle Paul – **who was also saddened by the fact that people were not believing in Jesus.**

[SLIDE – Prayers]

1st prayer from Colossians 4:3-4 – Paul says:

Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

2nd prayer from Romans 10:1 – Paul is moved to pray this for Israel:

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

(pause)

Brothers and sister here this morning - **is it our hearts desire that the Australianites be saved for Heaven – where there are no more tears – just everlasting peace and joy!**

Let's pray

Father God, we thank you that you balance your desire to restore us into a right relationship with you - with your need to punish and judge sin.

Thank you for your grace and mercy in sending Jesus.

Thank you do not take pleasure in punishing people and that it is your desire that all should come and repent and turn back to you.

Help us to be shedding tears for those who are lost from you and please open doors for our message of Jesus to come into the homes of our fellow Australians and that it would be our hearts' desire that they be saved.

In Jesus name, we pray, in Jesus Name, Amen.