

## **December 17**

**Scriptures:** Read 2 Kings 8

**Key Verse:** "... And the man of God wept." (2 Kings 8:11)

### **Overview**

We learn of Elisha once again doing good for the faithful Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:13-16, 32-36). He warned her to leave the land because a severe seven-year famine was coming. Elisha must have been well respected by the king, who was interested to hear reports from Gahazi, Elisha's servant, of "all the great things Elisha had done" (8:4). In the providence of God, the Shunammite woman returned and went to see the king about her property which had probably been confiscated by the crown when it was found to be abandoned. At that same time, Gehazi was telling the king about her son being raised from the dead. This miracle greatly impressed the king. Because of it, and Elisha's friendship with her, the king not only had all her property returned but saw to it that all the profit from her fields for the previous seven years was given to her. What an unexpected blessing and surprise from the Lord!

Elijah had been told by God to anoint Hazael as king over Syria (Aram) to succeed Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 19:15), but this task was given to his successor, Elisha, to accomplish. While Elisha was in Syria, maybe for this purpose, the king of Syria became ill. Perhaps Elisha's reputation as a man of God had preceded him through Naaman's witness (chapter 5). Hazael, a servant of the king with a high position, was sent to Elisha by the king to enquire if he would live or die.

Elisha's reply was interesting and ambiguous. It may have been through divine foreknowledge that Elisha knew Hazael had intended to kill the king, so his response was that the sickness itself was not fatal but that he would die anyway. The prophet knew that Hazael would not tell the king he was going to die; otherwise he would have made preparations for his heir to take the throne.

The divine appointment of Hazael as king was in order to punish Israel for their continued sin and rebellion against God. While staring at him, Elisha must have foreseen the terrible things that Hazael would do in his war against Israel. This caused Elisha to weep, for he deeply loved his people. His tender and sensitive spirit was grieved that Israel had not repented and turned from their wicked ways, for their sin would bring them death. Surely, when he returned to Israel, he preached with all the more fervency to bring salvation to his people. From the Word of God, we know that there will be a great and terrible judgment day. Like Elisha, it should make us weep to realize there will be precious souls condemned to eternal hell unless we reach them.

In the latter half of chapter eight, we are given historical information about the king of Judah who, sadly, walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. Jehoshaphat had been a godly king in Judah, but he had made an alliance with his idolatrous brethren in Israel (1 Kings 22:2-3, 44). Their situation of peace led to the marriage of his son Jehoram with the daughter of Ahab. She, in the manner of Jezebel, influenced her husband into idolatry (8:18). For the sake of David, his forefather, God did not bring destruction to Judah at that point, but the nation suffered revolts from the vassal kingdoms of Edom and Libnah. Their disobedience to God brought them nothing but trouble.

### **Prayer**

Lord, Your Word indicates that the heart of the King is in Your hand. We pray for the leader of our Nation. Grant wisdom to know what is right and courage to do it.