SECOND KINGS

Chapter 8

***The Shunammite’s Land Restored***

**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 the king to beg 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 beg 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.”**

**8:1** *the Lord has decreed a famine.* The famine should have been perceived by the people of the northern kingdom as a covenant curse sent on them because of their sin (see note on 4:38). (CSB)

*seven years.* It is not clear whether this famine began before or after the Aramean siege of Samaria (see 4:38; 6:24–7:20). (CSB)

**8:2** *She and her family went away.* Elisha’s instruction enabled the woman and her family to escape the privations of the famine. (CSB)

**8:3** *went to the king.* See note on 1Ki 3:16. (CSB)

*beg for her house and land.* Either someone had illegally occupied the woman’s property during her absence, or it had fallen to the domain of the king by virtue of its abandonment. (CSB)

**8:4** *Gehazi.* See 5:27. (CSB)

*Tell me about all the great things Elisha has done.* The king’s lack of familiarity with Elisha’s ministry is perhaps an indication that this incident occurred in the early days of the reign of Jehu rather than in the time of Joram, who had had numerous contacts with Elisha (see 3:13–14; 5:7–10; 6:10–23; 6:24–7:20). But see note on 5:7. (CSB)

**8:5** *as Gehazi was telling the king.* The woman’s approach to the king providentially coincided with Gehazi’s story of her son’s miraculous restoration to life through the ministry of Elisha. (CSB)

**8:6** *Give back everything that belonged to her.* The widow and her son were living examples of the Lord’s provision and blessing for those who were obedient to the word of the Lord through his prophets. (CSB)

***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’; but the Lord has revealed to me that he will in fact die.” 11 He stared at him with a fixed gaze until Hazael felt ashamed. 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.**

**8:7** *Elisha went to Damascus.* The time had come for Elisha to carry out one of the three tasks originally given to Elijah at Mount Horeb (see notes on 1Ki 19:15–16). The annals of the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser III record Assyrian victories over Ben-Hadad (Hadadezer) of Damascus in 846 b.c. and Hazael of Damascus in 842. Elisha’s visit to Damascus is to be dated c. 843. (CSB)

**8:8** *Consult the Lord through him.* In a reversal of the situation described in 1:1–4, a pagan king seeks an oracle from Israel’s God. (CSB)

*Will I recover … ?* The question is the same as that of Ahaziah in 1:2. (CSB)

**8:9** *forty camel-loads of all the finest wares of Damascus.* Damascus was the center for trade between Egypt, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. Ben-Hadad evidently thought a generous gift would favorably influence Elisha’s oracle. (CSB)

*Your son Ben-Hadad.* Use of father-son terminology is a tacit acknowledgment by Ben-Hadad of Elisha’s superiority (see 6:21; 1Sa 25:8). (CSB)

**8:10** *You will certainly recover.* This reading of the Hebrew text (see NIV text note for an alternative reading) is to be preferred (see v. 14) and understood as an assertion that Ben-Hadad’s illness was not terminal. (CSB)

**8:12** *harm you will do to the Israelites.* The Lord gave Elisha a clear picture of the severity of the judgment he was about to send on Israel by the hand of Hazael (see 9:14–16; 10:32; 12:17–18; 13:3, 22). (CSB)

*set fire … rip open their pregnant women.* These actions were characteristic of victorious armies in that time (see 15:16; Hos 10:14; 13:16; Am 1:13). Elisha’s words do not sanction such acts but simply describe Hazael’s future attacks on Israel. (CSB)

**8:13** *How could your servant, a mere dog, accomplish such a feat?* Hazael did not show repulsion at these violent acts but saw no possibility to gain the power necessary to accomplish them (for this metaphorical use of “dog” see note on 2Sa 9:8). (CSB)

*you will become king of Aram.* Elisha’s prophecy suggests that Hazael was not a legitimate successor to Ben-Hadad. In an Assyrian inscription Hazael is designated “the son of a nobody” (i.e., a commoner) who usurped the throne. (CSB)

**8:15** *died.* Elisha’s prophecy of Hazael’s kingship did not legitimize the assassination. Hazael’s murder of Ben-Hadad as well as his future acts of violence against Israel were wicked acts arising out of his own sinful heart (see Isa 10:5–19). His reign extended from c. 842 b.c. to c. 806 or 796, and he was followed by a son he named Ben-Hadad (13:24). (CSB)

***Jehoram King of Judah***

**16 In the fifth year of Joram son of Ahab king of Israel, when Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat began his reign as king of Judah. 17 He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. 18 He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord. 19 Nevertheless, for the sake of his servant David, the Lord was not willing to destroy Judah. He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever. 20 In the time of Jehoram, Edom rebelled against Judah and set up its own king. 21 So Jehoram went to Zair with all his chariots. The Edomites surrounded him and his chariot commanders, but he rose up and broke through by night; his army, however, fled back home. 22 To this day Edom has been in rebellion against Judah. Libnah revolted at the same time. 23 As for the other events of Jehoram’s reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? 24 Jehoram rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David. And Ahaziah his son succeeded him as king.**

**8:16** *fifth year of Joram.* 848 b.c. Jehoram had been co-regent with his father since 853 (see note on 1:17), but he now began his reign as sole king. (CSB)

**8:17** *reigned in Jerusalem eight years.* Jehoram’s sole reign is to be dated 848–841 b.c. (CSB)

**8:18** *as the house of Ahab had done.* Jehoram introduced Baal worship in Judah, as Ahab had done in the northern kingdom (see 11:18). Baal worship now spread to the southern kingdom at the same time it was being restricted in the northern kingdom by Ahab’s son Joram (see 3:1–2). (CSB)

*married a daughter of Ahab.* Jehoram’s wife was Athaliah, a daughter of Ahab but probably not of Jezebel (see v. 26; 2Ch 18:1). Athaliah’s influence on Jehoram paralleled that of Jezebel on Ahab (see 1Ki 16:31; 18:4; 19:1–2; 2Ch 21:6). (CSB)

**8:19** *lamp for David.* See note on 1Ki 11:36; see also Ps 132:17. The Lord spared Judah and its royal house the judgment he brought on the house of Ahab because of the covenant he had made with David (see 2Sa 7:16, 29; 2Ch 21:7). (CSB)

**8:20** *set up its own king.* Previously Edom had been subject to Judah and had been ruled by a deputy (see note on 3:9; see also 1Ki 22:47). (CSB)

**8:21** *his army … fled.* Although Jehoram and his army were able to break through an encirclement by Edomite forces, they were soundly defeated and forced to retreat to their own territory. (CSB)

**8:22** *To this day.* Until the time of the writing of the account of Jehoram’s reign used by the author of 1,2 Kings (see Introduction to 1 Kings: Author, Sources and Date; see also note on 1Ki 8:8). Later, Amaziah of Judah was able to inflict a serious defeat on Edom (14:7), and his successor Azariah regained control of the trade route to Elath through Edomite territory (14:22; 2Ch 26:2). (CSB)

*Libnah revolted at the same time.* Libnah appears to have been located close to the Philistine border near Lachish (see 19:8). It is likely that the revolt of Libnah was connected with that of the Philistines and Arabs described in 2Ch 21:16–17.

**8:23** *other events of Jehoram’s reign.* See 2Ch 21:4–20. (CSB)

*annals of the kings of Judah.* See note on 1Ki 14:29. (CSB)

**8:24** *rested with his fathers.* See notes on 1Ki 1:21; 2Ch 21:20. (CSB)

***Ahaziah King of Judah***

**25 In the twelfth year of Joram son of Ahab king of Israel, Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign. 26 Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem one year. His mother’s name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri king of Israel. 27 He walked in the ways of the house of Ahab and did evil in the eyes of the Lord, as the house of Ahab had done, for he was related by marriage to Ahab’s family. 28 Ahaziah went with Joram son of Ahab to war against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth Gilead. The Arameans wounded Joram; 29 so King Joram returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramoth in his battle with Hazael king of Aram. Then Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to Jezreel to see Joram son of Ahab, because he had been wounded.**

**8:25** *twelfth year of Joram.* 841 b.c. In 9:29 the first year of Joram’s reign was counted as his accession year and his second year as the first year of his reign, whereas here his accession year was counted as the first year of his reign (see Introduction to 1 Kings: Chronology). (CSB)

**8:26** *twenty-two years old when he became king.* See note on 2Ch 22:2. (CSB)

*Athaliah.* See note on v. 18. (CSB)

**8:27** *ways of the house of Ahab.* See 2Ch 22:3–5. (CSB)

**8:28** *Ahaziah went with Joram … to war against Hazael … at Ramoth Gilead.* As Jehoshaphat had joined Ahab in battle against the Arameans at Ramoth Gilead (1Ki 22), so now Ahaziah joined his uncle Joram in a similar venture. On the previous occasion Ahab met his death (1Ki 22:37). On this occasion Joram was wounded and, while recuperating in Jezreel (see note on 1Ki 21:1), both he and his nephew Ahaziah were assassinated by Jehu (see 9:14–28). (CSB)