

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS  
LESSON 5A  
THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS  
CHAPTER 8**

**INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 8 continues to show the working of the Almighty and Sovereign God over the affairs of men through His prophet Elisha. "That God is sovereign" is a truth many have tried to ignore and to destroy. They have all failed. God remains totally and completely sovereign. This sovereignty of God is seen very clearly in this chapter and the next. The lesson we glean from such wonderful revelations from God is to know that nothing happens by chance and God is always in control of the lives of all His children. This control is not haphazard but one of genuine love and concern and will always turn out for the best and for His glory.

The Shunammite woman whom we encountered in chapter 4 reappears in chapter 8, and her previous kindness and generosity to the man of God once again brought her a good turn of events. God reveals that He is not only the LORD God of Israel, but also the God of other foreign nations if their citizens would only believe in Him according to Holy Scriptures. God revealed to Elisha that Hazael (a

servant of Ben-Hadad, the King of Syria) would be the next king. In fact Elijah was told to anoint him king but he did not do it. God did not forget His plan and purpose and so the assignment fell upon Elisha.

Judah is brought into focus at this juncture in chapter 8. Judah's spiritual decline is described. The account is instructive for it shows how alliances through unholy marriages can result in disasters.

**OUTLINE**

1. The land of the Shunammite was restored (vv.1-6);
2. Hazael Became King of Syria (vv.7-15);
3. Judah Followed Israel (vv16-24);
4. Rebellion in Judah (vv.25-29)

**COMMENTARY**

**The Shunammite's Property  
Restored – 8:1-6**

The woman in the beginning of chapter 8 is undoubtedly the Shunammite woman mentioned in 2 Kings 4:8. She is identified as the woman whose son was raised from the dead by Elisha. This episode probably occurred before the Naaman incident recorded in 2 Kings 5. The reason is that the King would not have allowed a leper (Gehazi was struck with leprosy after he deceived Naaman out of covetousness) to enter into his presence. Otherwise the King of Israel's reaction to the news from the King of Syria to heal Naaman was most

unjustified and reflected his gross lack of faith (cf. 2 Kings 5:7).

Elisha had kind regards for her. He informed her of the approaching seven-year famine. He also advised her to take her family to reside wherever she could sojourn. She went to live in the land of the Philistines for seven years. When the famine was over, she returned to Israel to find her property and land either taken over by someone or by the government. She lodged a complaint to the king to reclaim her house and land. Her aged husband was presumably dead because he was not mentioned. Her son was still a minor.

In the meantime, Elisha's servant Gehazi was relating to the King of Israel all that the king wanted to hear about the miraculous things that Elisha had done in the land. Gehazi's presence before the king could mean that the events accounted in 2 Kings were not presented chronologically. The intent of the Holy Spirit is to show that God was with the Shunammite woman. At that point in time when Gehazi was relating to the king that Elisha had raised a woman's son from the dead, the Shunammite woman was also being brought before the king with her complaint. Gehazi recognised the Shunammite woman and immediately drew the king's attention to her as the woman whose dead son was restored to life by Elisha.

This was no mere coincidence. The only logical explanation for the perfect timing was that God was in control. God was gracious and merciful to the woman, who had been kind and

generous to His prophet Elisha. The king was touched by the account and to have met and heard from the very woman whom Elisha had helped. The king ordered an officer to look into her case and to restore all her property and land. In addition, whatever fruits that the land accrued during the seven years while she was away would also be given to her. She received more than what she expected! The phrase "even until now" indicates that the Shunammite woman was still in possession of her house and land at the time when the Holy Spirit recorded this episode for our encouragement.

#### **Hazael Becomes King of Syria – 8:7-15**

Elisha went to Damascus, Syria. The reason for his visit to Damascus is not given. Earlier, God had commissioned Elijah to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria (1 Kings 19:15). It is not mentioned that Elijah had done that. It is reasonable to surmise that Elisha now made his trip to Damascus to fulfil this mission. It took great faith and courage on his part to travel to Damascus. Syria had been an enemy of Israel for a long time. It is most likely that his trip was made after he had healed Naaman of his leprosy. That would definitely have rendered his trip less dangerous. He went at a time when Ben-Hadad, the Syrian King was sick.

The king was told that Elisha was in town. Knowing Elisha's healing power, he assigned Hazael, his officer, to take presents to Elisha and "enquire of the LORD (YAHWEH)" whether he would recover from his illness (v.8).

Accordingly, Hazael brought much gifts for Elisha – forty camels of good things! Hazael greeted Elisha very cordially. He told Elisha that Ben-Hadad the King of Syria had sent him to ask Elisha whether Ben-Hadad would recover from his illness. Elisha answered that Ben-Hadad would certainly recover, but he continued saying that the LORD had shown to him that Ben-Hadad would surely die (8:10). This may seem confusing but a careful examination can clear the confusion. Ben-Hadad's sickness in itself was not fatal. In the normal course of his life, he would recover. But the LORD had also given Elisha a vision that the king would surely die. It means that Ben-Hadad would die from a different cause and not from his illness. We will soon learn that Ben-Hadad was assassinated by Hazael himself.

Having conveyed his vision to Hazael, Elisha looked intently at Hazael until the latter was “ashamed” or unsettled; and then Elisha wept (8:11). Expectedly, Hazael asked Elisha why he wept. Elisha explained that he knew of the atrocities that Hazael would commit on the people of Israel – their strongholds would be razed by fire, their youths would be slain, their children dashed, and their pregnant women ripped of their child. Instead of responding immediately and emphatically with a “No,” Hazael responded thus: “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” But the word of God declares, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

Elisha answered that the LORD had shown him that Hazael would be king over Syria. This suggests that Hazael would have the power and means to carry out the atrocities which he had just mentioned. It is most likely that after saying this, Elisha anointed Hazael although the text did not say so.

Hazael left Elisha and returned to his master, Ben-Hadad, who asked him what Elisha had said. Hazael reported only the first half of Elisha's message that Ben-Hadad would recover from his illness. Then the very next day, Hazael assassinated his king by suffocating him to death with a wet thick cloth. Hazael then declared himself king and reigned over Syria. He ruled from 841 B.C. to 801 B.C. During this period, Jehoram, Jehu and Jehoahaz ruled in the Northern Kingdom, and Ahaziah, Athaliah and Joash ruled in the Southern Kingdom.

#### **Judah Follows Israel – 8:16-24**

This short section (vv.16-24) is significant. It reveals how the King of Judah turned away from worshipping the LORD to worshipping Baal. At this time, Joram (or sometimes also called Jehoram), the son of Ahab, was the King of Israel. In the fifth year of his rule over Israel, Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah, began to reign in Judah. So for a while the two kings of Israel and Judah had the same name “Jehoram” (v.16). The reason for the same name could be because of the marriage arrangement between the son of Jehoshaphat and daughter of Ahab, Athaliah (whose mother was Jezebel).

Now Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, was thirty-two years old when he ascended the throne of Judah. He ruled for eight years in Jerusalem, the capital city of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (v.17). Although his father, Jehoshaphat was a good king in respect of his religious beliefs and internal politics of the kingdom, he set a bad example for his son, Jehoram. He cooperated with the house of Ahab in at least three major projects which have been noted earlier; first of which he nearly lost his life. He married his son, Jehoram to Athaliah, the daughter of King Ahab and his wife Jezebel (8:18). We noted that King Ahab was an evil king who was greatly influenced by his wife Jezebel, a devotee of Baal. During his reign in Israel, Ahab made Baalism an official religion of Israel.

In spite of all these wicked deeds, King Jehoshaphat of Judah allowed the marriage of his son, Jehoram, to Athaliah, the daughter of King Ahab and Jezebel. Jehoram, the King of Judah, was greatly influenced by his wife, Athaliah, who in turn was influenced by Jezebel, her mother. Jehoram followed the ways of the families of his father-in-law, Ahab. Jehoram of Judah was one of the worst kings of the Southern Kingdom. He committed the sin of murder, idolatry, blasphemy and oppression.<sup>1</sup> During his

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Chronicles 21:1 Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead. 2 And he had brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah: all these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. 3 And their father gave them great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah: but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram; because

reign, the religious and moral life of the people in Judah had degraded to such an extent that a temple to Baal was constructed in Jerusalem (2 Kings 11:18). In spite of all these, the LORD God would not destroy Judah because of His covenantal promise to King David. God had promised that his descendants would ascend the throne, and would ultimately culminate in Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham and the son of David (Matthew 1:1). He is the Messiah and would reign forever (v.19). God is faithful to His Word and promise. This was a suzerainty covenant and it depended only upon God's faithfulness for it to become a reality. It existed for nearly a thousand years till the birth of Christ.

#### **Rebellion in Judah – 8:25-29**

The wicked ways of Jehoram the King of Judah incurred the displeasure of the LORD God. Jehoram listened more to his wife Athaliah and followed the ways of his father-in-law instead of attending to the affairs of the country, Edom that was formerly a vassal state of Judah now revolted. The Edomites now boasted of a superior army and sought self-determination. Jehoram led his army to Zair, a little place in the east of the Dead Sea to prepare to battle against the Edomites. But the Edomites surrounded the Judeans. Jehoram made a desperate counter attack at night. He managed to break through the Edomites' line and retreated back to Judah. His army was routed and his soldiers were disbanded and they

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he was the firstborn. 4 Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and *divers* also of the princes of Israel.

returned to their “tents” (homes). Jehoram failed in his attempt to subdue Edom. Edom was successful in freeing themselves from the dominance of Judah.

Encouraged by the action of the Edomites, the people that lived in Libnah also revolted at the same time (8:21). Libnah was one of the royal cities of the Canaanites which were taken by Joshua (Josh. 10:29-32; 12:15). They too wrested themselves free from the dominance of Judah. God’s people who walked in His ways and sought the aid of God had not lost a battle in any war. Jehoram suffered two military defeats. He is remembered for his apostasy and military weakness. His death is summarily mentioned here but more details of his life and deeds are given in 2 Chronicles 21. When he died, he was buried with his fathers in the city of David. His son, Ahaziah, ascended the throne. He was twenty-two years old when he became the King of Judah. But he reigned only for one year. He did not really rule over Judah for he was too tied up with his mother, Athaliah. He walked after the ways of his grandfather-in-law, Ahab, and did evil before the LORD.

Ahaziah helped his uncle, Jehoram, King of Israel to war against Hazael, King of Syria in Ramoth-Gilead. The Syrians wounded King Jehoram of Israel who then retreated to Jezreel instead of Samaria to recuperate. Ahaziah then went down to Jezreel to visit the wounded Jehoram, King of Israel. Ahaziah was a weak king in Judah. Actually real power rested in his mother Athaliah. Therefore, for a

period of time, two pagan women who hated the LORD God of Israel (YAHWEH) and loved idolatry and wickedness with all their heart ruled over Israel and Judah. It was a critical time for Israel and Judah and a very dark hour in the plan of God’s salvation for mankind. It brought God’s judgement on them.

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

This chapter should teach all of us to love and fear God because He is merciful. He cares for those who obey Him and walk according to His ways. Those who have shown kindness and generosity to His servants and prophets are blessed by Him whenever they are in need.

We learn that nothing is too small or insignificant as far as God is concerned. Fear God for He is truly “a consuming fire” (Deuteronomy 4:4; 9:3, Hebrews 12:29). He is true to His word and promises. Although He might delay His punishment on those who had rebelled against Him, judgement on them would be certain. We saw this in the judgement of God on the house of Ahab. For several years, he and his descendants controlled Israel and did many wicked things to the ordinary people and to the prophets of God. But when the “fullness of time” was come, they could not escape the judgement of God. We also learn that whatever God has said and promised He will do, He will surely accomplish it. It was God’s plan and purpose to raise Hazael as the next king of Syria.

Another aspect of God which we should always remember is that while God puts up men according to His

counsel and foreknowledge to accomplish His plan and purposes, He is not the author of nor is He responsible for the wicked deeds of these men. But they could not do anything to thwart the sovereign plan of God for His people and for the world. Amen.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** 2 Kings 8:1-6; Psalm 33:18-22; Romans 8:28.

**TUESDAY:** 2 Kings 8:7-15; Luke 19:41-44.

**WEDNESDAY:** 2 Kings 8:16-29; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Psalm 119:59.

**THURSDAY:** 2 Kings 8:1-29.

**FRIDAY:** 2 Kings 8:1-29.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What aspect of God’s character is illustrated by the incident of the Shunammite woman? Have you experienced this truth in your life or the lives of your fellow Christians whom you know?

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2. Did Hazael kill his own king BECAUSE it was prophesied to him that he would or did he intend to kill his own king even BEFORE the prophecy was told to him? What are the some of the implications from your answer?

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3. Why did God tell us that He had “ordained” Hazael to be the next King of Syria and that he will be the one who will bring death to Israel? God is the Yaweh of Israel then should he not protect Israel instead of “ordaining” someone like Hazael to slaughter His own people? How does this truth affect your relationship and understanding of God?

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4. What was the reason for the judgement to be pronounced upon King Joram (son of Ahab) and King Ahaziah? What lessons do their lives teach regarding the disastrous results of marriage alliances with those who are the enemies of God? What does the New Testament teach us about such relationships?

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5. What promise from God is reiterated in 2 Kings 8:19? What does this promise communicate about God's plans for His people?

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6. What have you learned from this chapter that has helped you in your relationship with God and with men?

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