



The Ministry of Elisha

Lesson 5: The LORD's Arrow of Victory

Introduction

Have you ever given a gift... and have it gone unacknowledged?

The Lord continued to do great things for Israel, though she had turned away. But in this lesson, as we conclude our study of the life and ministry of Elisha, once again we see how the Lord provides especially for those who believe and trust in him.

After the lifting of the siege on Samaria, we see only little bits and pieces about the ministry of Elisha. But for the most part, all that we hear about are Elisha's dealings with the kings of his time. Once again we cross paths with the Shunammite woman, whose son Elisha raised to life. According to the word of the Lord as given to Elijah at Mount Horeb, Elisha leaves the confines of his own country to anoint a new king for Israel's enemy. And finally, Elisha the faithful prophet is called home.

A. Read *2 Kings 8:1-6: The LORD is Faithful to His Own*

- List 3-4 items in this section that once again underscore God's grace to people.

Learn

- Famine again! cf. **De 32:19-29**.
- Details about the woman's situation: **2 Ki 4:14 (cmp. 2 Ki 8:5); Psalm 146**
- Evaluate the King of Israel's behavior in this situation.

Take to Heart

- Luther explained in the *Small Catechism* -- "Deliver us from evil" -- that God answers that prayer by: 1) preventing evil from reaching us; 2) turning evil for our good; 3) taking us away from evil – forever!. For personal reflection / sharing: Think of a time(s) in your own life where God, as he did with the Shunammite woman here, simply *prevented* evil from affecting you.

The Lord certainly looked after his chosen people. But his hand was also at work in the governments of the world. According to the command of God, Elisha goes to Damascus, where he anoints Hazael king over Aram.

B. Read **2 Kings 8:7-15** *A Treacherous Turnover in Aram*

- Consider the (seemingly) contradictory answer from Elisha in **8:10**. But **cf. the NIV footnote** on this verse.
- What does this entire episode reveal about Elisha's character? about Hazael's?

Learn

- Remember the directive God had given to Elijah in **1 Ki 19:15-19**.
- Why might the king of Aram have been so interested in consulting Elisha, the man of God?

Take to Heart

- Was God's will accomplished by Hazael's actions? (But also think about **Amos 1:1-5!**)
- Here again we see one of Israel's great prophets involved not just in the politics of Israel, but the politics of foreign nations as well. As we think about the privilege that we, as Americans, have to participate in our own government, are there any thoughts about our Christian view of politics that come to mind?

SUMMARY OF INTERVENING CHAPTERS: 2 KI 8:16-11

*In 2 Kings 8:16-29 we are told about two of the kings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah (see the chart at the end of this lesson for a complete listing of the kings from the time of Elisha through the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians). But Elisha's ministry was confined for the most part to the Northern Kingdom, or Israel. Yet the prophecy of **Gen.27:37-40** find fulfillment here as God shakes the nations.*

*The following chapters tell of the harsh judgment that finally fell upon the House of Omri, as Elijah had announced to Ahab. Yet you may remember that God, in his mercy, noticed Ahab's humbling of himself following the rebuke by Elijah over the murder of Naboth, and God had decreed that the disaster would not come during Ahab's lifetime, but during that of his descendants (cf. **1 Ki 21:28-29**).*

The man God had directed Elijah to anoint as Israel's king – Jehu – was faithful and fierce in carrying out the Lord's command to destroy the House of Omri. This anointing was done by one of the young prophets at Elisha's directive (2 Ki 9:1-13). Reforms began both in Israel and in Judah. In Judah, under the protection of Jehoida the priest, young Joash is hidden and spared while Athaliah (the only queen to rule, also from Ahab's line) had a brief reign of terror in Judah. Joash was proclaimed king of Judah and began restoration of the Temple, which had fallen into disrepair.

In Israel, Jehu killed the family of Ahab and had Jezebel hurled to her death from a palace window. He then proceeded to deceive and annihilate the prophets of Baal. Though Jehu did well, his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord, and so "In those days the LORD began to reduce the size of Israel (2 Ki 10:32)," largely using the very man Elisha had anointed, Hazael of Aram.

*Our last contact with Elisha is in **2 Kings 13:14-21**. Through Elisha the Lord had promised victory over Aram. But Jehoash was less than enthusiastic about his prospects. We visit Elisha on his death bed, continuing to proclaim the victory of the Lord.*

C. Read **2 Kings 13:14-21: The LORD's Arrow of Victory!**

- How does the king acknowledge the importance of Elisha?
- What did Elisha prophecy after the shooting of the first arrow? *Victory over Aram.*
- Why was Elisha upset by the king striking the ground three times?
- Even in death, in what way was Elisha still a testament to the life-giving power of God?

Learn

- What do you make of the phrase, "the chariots and horsemen of Israel"? (2 Ki 2:12)
- Even now, at the end of Elisha's long ministry, how do we see God still reaching out to his people in grace?

Take to Heart

- Read **Ephesians 3:20-21**. Why is it that we too find ourselves, like Jehoash, asking for "too little" from God? What are some great blessings of God which we are often too timid to seize boldly? What words of the Lord's Prayer especially spur us on to ask for great things from him?

Conclusion

After nearly 50 years as prophet in Israel, the Lord rewarded his servant with the gift of eternal life. We are not told that the mantle was passed to anyone else the way it had been passed from Elijah to Elisha. But the people of Israel had no excuse. The Word of the Lord had been proclaimed in their midst. God's mercy had abounded. About seventy years after the death of Elisha, Israel would be overrun by the Assyrian army, and its inhabitants would be carried off into captivity.

One-hundred and forty years later, the same would happen to Judah. One could only survive such difficult times if grounded in God's words of promise. In closing, read the words of the prophet Isaiah, a prophet for the kingdom of Judah, in **Isaiah 11:10-12,16**.