

## **Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 20, Part 3**

### **2 Kings 6-8, Part 3**

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We're talking about Elisha's ministry of deliverance as he delivered the city from the terrible, terrible siege and famine going with it. Now, we have one more incident. Once more, the Shunammite woman is seen.

Once again, I want to say there's nothing in the Bible by accident. If it's here, God has a purpose in it. We first saw the Shunammite woman back in 2 Kings 4. We saw in chapter 2 the introduction to Elisha's ministry, the positive as he made the spring at Jericho no longer, the water no longer poisonous.

And then the destruction of the 42 young mockers, positive, negative. Then in chapter 3, we saw the story of the attack on Moab. And Elisha's rather reluctant message to Jehoram.

Then, at the beginning of chapter 4, we see the story of the widow's oil, which is very reminiscent of Elijah. Then, in the middle of chapter 4, we saw the story of the Shunammite woman. And you remember that she was very impressed with him.

And she made a room on the roof of her house for Elisha whenever he would come by that way. And that Elisha promised her a son. And lo and behold, the son was born.

And then the son was apparently stricken with sunstroke. And the woman in total faith, mounted her donkey, went to Elisha. And Elisha realized what had happened.

And ultimately, the boy's life was restored. There's a sense in which that story, coupled with the widow, emphasizes again what is this ministry about. This ministry is about the resurrection from the dead and the accomplishment of the impossible. What Baal could never do.

Baal could never bring endless abundance. Baal could never raise the dead. Yahweh can.

So here now, at the end of these accounts, from chapter 3 through chapter 7, the accounts of Elisha's ministry, almost all of it positive, we have this story. I don't think it's accidental. Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, there it is, and you see that bingo right at the start.

What's this about? 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. 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 for seven years.

There are two things there I would call to your attention. Number one, God was looking out for his own. In the course of nature, a famine is going to come.

Did God send the famine? I don't think so. I've thought about this many times. Have you? Was a massive flood on the Ohio River a disaster when there were no people living in the Ohio Valley? Was a hurricane a terrible disaster on the Gulf Coast when nobody was living there? I don't know what the world was like before Genesis 3, when human beings brought sin into the world.

Was it a world in perfect balance? Or were there cycles? So, God says a famine's coming, and I want you to warn that good lady. So how did she respond? She responded in faith. I think it's pretty clear the famine hadn't started yet, but Elisha says one's coming, and she says we're out of here.

Wow. Wow. I want to be that kind of person, don't you? A person who, once it is clear what God is saying, says, I'm on my way.

Now sometimes it takes a while to figure that out. Because again and again, in my experience, what he said has often required upheaval. And I'll testify, I don't like upheaval.

So sometimes in my life, I've spent a good deal of time saying, God, is that what you're really saying? Again, I'll testify; there have been times when I've had impressions that were very powerful and quite wrong. Now, I've known people who say, oh, I know the voice of God immediately. I wish that were true for me.

It isn't. But nevertheless, as I've grown older, I can sense when he's speaking. But that's the kind of person I want to be.

I want to be like her. God says, hey, a famine's coming. You need to get out of here. Okay, uproot, go.

Go to a foreign land, the Philistines. Not friends of Israel. She got up and went.

At the end of seven years, she came back from the land of the Philistines and went to appeal to the king for her house and land. Do you remember when we talked about Naboth and his vineyard? Land had to stay in the family. It didn't belong to the Israelites.

It belonged to the Lord, and he gave them the use of the land. So, in this situation, it looks as though when land was abandoned, it became a royal possession. And so,

she's going to say, hey, can I have the family land back now? The king was talking to Gehazi.

Wait a minute, wait a minute. After the Naaman debacle, Gehazi contracted this terrible skin disease. Is this story possibly before the Naaman incident? And has been put here for theological reasons? That's one possibility.

But another possibility is that Gehazi has been healed. Let me talk about that for a moment. I think this is an important element in biblical prophecy.

In pagan prophecy, the prophet tells what is predetermined. Maybe it's the shape of the stars or something, but this is going to happen. It has to happen.

Biblical prophecy is different. Biblical prophecy tells us what will happen if. And that if is always dependent on us.

If you obey God's commands for life or if you don't obey God's commands for life, nothing has to happen. That's pretty hard for some people to get through their heads. So, you get statements that are made that are very sweeping.

So, we're told in this incident that Gehazi and his family will be lepers, remembering what I've said about Hansen's disease. That's it. It's going to happen.

If you go back to chapter 6, verse 27, Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever. Bingo. No ifs, no ands, no buts.

There it is. Forever. You get a similar statement in Zechariah.

Jerusalem will never fall again. Never. That was in 520 BC.

Jerusalem did fall again. It fell in 70 AD. It fell in 135 AD.

And it has fallen several other times. What's going on? Is the Bible lying? No. Assuming you are faithful, keeping God's Word, and living your life for Him, Jerusalem needs never to fall again.

I think it works the other way. Gehazi, you're going to be lepers forever unless you turn to God in repentance and faith. I don't know what happened here.

But I think it's entirely possible that, in fact, Gehazi has been healed. I think again and again of the statement we're going to run into later in this book that Judah went into exile because of the sins of Manasseh. King who ruled for 52 years.

Terrible sinner. But his grandson, Josiah, repented. But the Bible says, nevertheless, God took Judah into exile because of the sins of Manasseh.

I'll say more about that when we get there. But I just want to plant that in your mind. Was it predetermined this was going to happen no matter what or not? Think about that.

But in this case, I want to suggest to you the possibility that, in fact, Gehazi has repented. He has believed and he has been healed. So, what's he doing? He's telling the story.

Now it's interesting to me. The king wants to hear back in chapter 8 again. The king says, tell me about all the great things Elisha has done. Has he repented? I don't think so.

See, we all like to hear miracle stories, don't we? We like to hear wonder stories. He doesn't say, tell me about Yahweh, who has inspired Elisha to do these wonderful things. He doesn't want to know about Yahweh.

He wants to know about Elisha. Now, maybe I'm being unkind. Maybe, indeed, he's had somewhat of a change of heart.

I don't know. But I don't think so. I think he's just interested in exciting things, strange things.

And so Gehazi, 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, making a point here, aren't we? Came to appeal to the king for house and land. Gehazi said this is the woman, my lord, the king. This is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.

By my count, four times. Restored to life, restored to life, restored to life. Do you think they're trying to make a point? Yeah.

Could Yahweh restore Israel to life? Yes, he could. Yes, he could. What he's done for that boy, he could do for his son, Israel.

What's going to happen next is the mechanism for destroying Baalism. But it didn't go far enough. The point I think is being made is that Israel can be restored if anybody repents and believes.

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 till now. Well, that's very generous. But where is repentance and faith? I don't see it.

And we're not going to see it in the days to come. So, the question is for you and me, what is it that God wants to restore in your life, in my life? How does he want to bring back what has been and what should be and what can be? Oh, he is the miracle working God. It's not Elisha's miracles, it's Yahweh's miracles.

And those miracles are as much available to you and me today as they ever were then. Now, let me say that they may not be of the visible kind that Elisha and Elisha performed. That was a special moment in the history of Israel, just as Jesus' ministry was a special moment in the history of faith.

And in those moments, great miracles are likely to occur. But what I want to say to you is the miracle of new life, the miracle of redeemed life, the miracle of life brought back from the death of sin and hell. That's a miracle that is available to you and me every day. Praise his name.