

### The Shunammite Woman's Land is Restored

2 Kings 8:1-6

2 Kings 8:1-6 - *"Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, "Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years." So the woman arose and did according to the saying of the man of God, and she went with her household and dwelt in the land of the Philistines seven years.*

*It came to pass, at the end of seven years, that the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went to make an appeal to the king for her house and for her land. Then the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me, please, all the great things Elisha has done." Now it happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored the dead to life, that there was the woman whose son he had restored to life, appealing to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life." And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed a certain officer for her, saying, "Restore all that was hers, and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now."*

#### Background Notes

Verse 4 says, *"Then the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God."* Wait a minute! Didn't Gehazi have leprosy? What's he doing talking to the king? Here we have another event in the life of Elisha that probably not in exact chronological order.

King Jehoram wanted to find out about the miracles of Elisha so he interviewed Gehazi.

King Jehoram, by the way, was somewhat like Herod Antipas of the New Testament, at the time of Christ. Herod Antipas loved to hear John the Baptist preach, and he wanted to see Jesus Christ do a miracle, but there was no repentance in his life. In the same way, King Jehoram liked to see what God was doing - but there was no repentance in his life.

The king asked Gehazi about the miracles that Elisha had done, so Gehazi related the story of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4). She and her husband had built a "prophet's chamber" for Elisha at their home. When their son died, through the ministry of Elisha the Lord had raised him back to life. Some time after the boy was raised back to life, Elisha warned the woman that a seven-year famine was going to come upon the land. He counseled her to leave the country until the famine was over. So she and her household went to the land of the Philistines. (She may have been a widow by this time.)

After seven years, she returned to find that her home and land had been confiscated, perhaps taken illegally, or perhaps confiscated by the local government because they may have thought it had been abandoned. It may even have become royal property, and that's why she appealed to the king.

So the woman came to the royal court to appeal to the king for her property, and guess what? Just as she and her son arrived, Gehazi was relating the story of how Elisha had raised her son back to life! *“Now it happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored the dead to life, that there was the woman whose son he had restored to life, appealing to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, “My Lord, my king. This is the woman and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life.”*

What a coincidence! What perfect timing! So the king restored not only her house and property, but also all the income that was made from the use of her land while she was gone. And she lived happily ever after. Well... the Bible doesn't say that! But the Bible does provide a happy ending to its account of the Shunammite woman.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The Lord reveals His secrets to His servants.

Verse 1 says that the Lord was planning to send a famine upon Israel. This famine would have been discipline, because Israel had gone away from the Lord to worship idols. But the Lord let Elisha know about the famine to come. The Lord did not reveal this coming famine to everyone, but He did reveal it to His servant Elisha.

This is not the only instance in the Bible where the Lord revealed His plans. Genesis 18:17 says: *“And the Lord said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?’* What was God going to do there? He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. God revealed that secret to Abraham, the servant of God. And in Amos 3:7 we read, *“Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”*

As Christians, we are servants of God, and as servants, God reveals some of His secret plans to us. The Lord reveals His secrets to His servants. For example, we know what the future holds. We know from Daniel 9 that there will be a period of tribulation in the future. As Elisha knew there was a coming seven-year famine, so we know from the word of God there is coming a seven-year tribulation in the future.

In fact, when you study the Bible in depth, an amazing amount of information about God's plans for the future is revealed right there in Scripture. It's there for you and me, who are God's servants, to know and understand. The Lord reveals His secrets to His servants.

### 2. What the world calls coincidence is really divine providence.

Look at verse 5 (and I'm paraphrasing a little): Now it just so happened that as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the woman's son back to life, guess what? The woman came into the court, to appeal for her land! What a

coincidence! Did it just happen by accident - by chance? Of course not! This was no mere coincidence. This was God's perfect timing.

The world would say an event like that was "just a coincidence," but what the world calls coincidence is really providence. God was working behind the scenes on behalf of the Shunammite woman. This was divine guidance.

Here are a couple of Scriptures to back up this teaching. Romans 8:28 indicates that in all things God is working for the good of those who love Him – those who are called according to His purposes. Ephesians 1:11 says that God works all things after the counsel of His will, and certainly the counsel of His will is our best long-term interest! So what the world calls coincidence is really divine providence.

Here's an illustration from my life: When I joined the faculty at Emmaus Bible College in 1975, Margie and I had one weekend to find a house in the Chicago area (where Emmaus was located at that time). We really prayed hard about this. We prayed that the Lord would lead us to just the right home, just the right neighborhood, the right school district for the kids - and of course the right price! We came in from Boston on a Friday night and made arrangements with a real estate agent. We looked all day Saturday, but couldn't find anything suitable in our price range.

Late in the day, we were shown a house that was empty. It had been rented, but the owners now lived in Texas and they wanted to sell the house. It looked just like the house for us! It met all the qualifications that we were looking for, except one. The price was way out of line. There was no way we could afford it. So we said, "This is how much we've got. Let's just take a shot and make an offer." The real estate agent laughed at us and said, "No way they're going to accept this." But we asked him to make the call and tell them we'd made an offer.

Would you believe? The owners accepted the offer! To make a long story short, on the Friday night, the night before we made the offer, the owners had decided that they had to unload the house, and they would sell it to the best offer that came along. They decided they would accept any offer that was at or above exactly what we offered! Just a coincidence - right? No way! That was God's perfect timing. What the world calls coincidence is really God's timing. What the world calls coincidence is really divine providence.

Well, that illustration is quite a practical application, but we still can get more practical applications out of this passage.

## **Practical Applications**

### **1. Use godly counsel in making important decisions.**

In verse 2 the woman made a very important decision. She and her household left their home and country for seven years. That was no small decision. That was a major uprooting. What about the boy's schooling? What about the

property? What about income? But notice - she didn't just make this decision on the spur of the moment, and it wasn't just her own bright idea. She used the godly counsel of the godly prophet Elisha.

We, too, should use godly counsel in making important decisions – what college to attend, or who to marry, or where to live, or what career to pursue, or when to change jobs, or what church to go to, or what ministry to be involved in. Use godly counsel in making important decisions!

## **2. Setbacks and disappointments don't necessarily mean we made a bad decision.**

When the woman returned home from the land of the Philistines, she faced a severe setback. Her land and her home had been taken over. Quite a disappointment, and quite a setback! Did that mean she had made the wrong decision to go to the land of the Philistines? No, the text makes it quite clear that she did the right thing when she followed the advice of God's spokesman, Elisha.

We have a number of other examples in Scripture. Think of the apostle Paul. He made the decision to go to Rome. He got there, but as a prisoner. There were disappointments and setbacks along the way, but did that mean he made a wrong decision when he wanted to go to Rome? No, no way. It's quite clear in the book of Romans that Paul made the right decision. Setbacks and disappointments are not necessarily an indication that we made a bad decision.

You're going to experience setbacks and disappointments in life. They may possibly be an indication that you made a bad decision - but not necessarily! For example, a decision to work in camp ministry for the summer may set you back financially. It may even bring some disappointments into your life. In fact, almost everyone who has made the decision to serve in children's ministry can say you were disappointed along the way.

Setbacks and disappointments that come your way are not necessarily an indication that you made a bad decision. Certainly your decision to serve the Lord was the right decision! Setbacks and disappointments are not necessarily an indication that we made the wrong decision.