

## Elisha's Announcement to Hazael

### 2 Kings 8:7-15

**2 Kings 8:7-15** – *“Then Elisha went to Damascus, and Ben-Hadad king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, ‘The man of God has come.’ And the king said to Hazael, ‘Take a present in your hand, and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, ‘Shall I recover from this disease?’” So Hazael went to meet Elisha and took a present with him, of every good thing of Damascus, forty camel-loads. He came and stood before him, and said, “Your son Ben-Hadad king of Syria has sent me to you, saying, ‘Shall I recover from this disease?’” And Elisha said to him, “Go, say to him, ‘You shall certainly recover.’ However the LORD has shown me that he will really die.”*

*Then Elisha stared at him with a fixed gaze until Hazael was embarrassed. And the man of God wept. And Hazael said, “Why is my lord weeping?” He answered, “Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel: Their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword; and you will dash their children, and rip open their women with child.” So Hazael said, “But what is your servant—a dog, that he should do this gross thing?” And Elisha answered, “The LORD has shown me that you will become king over Syria.”*

*Then he departed from Elisha, and came to his master, who said to him, “What did Elisha say to you?” And he answered, “He told me you would surely recover.” But it happened on the next day that he took a thick cloth and dipped it in water, and spread it over the king's face so that he died; and Hazael reigned in his place.”*

### Background Notes:

Verse 7 tells us that Elisha went to Damascus. Damascus was (and still is) the capital of the country of Syria. Why was Elisha going to Damascus? He was going to announce that Hazael would replace Ben-Hadad II as the next king of Syria: *“The Lord has shown me that you will become king over Syria” (v13).*

King Ben-Hadad was sick, and when he heard that Elisha had come to Damascus, he sent his servant Hazael to find out from Elisha whether or not he would recover. And the king sent a big gift to Elisha - forty camel-loads of *“every good thing of Damascus”!* That's a pretty big gift! We don't know whether Elisha accepted this gift or not.

When Hazael arrived Elisha said to him, *“Go say to Ben-Hadad, ‘You shall surely recover. However, the Lord has shown me that he will really die.’* That sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? It sounds like Elisha was making a contradicting statement. What Elisha meant here was: yes, Ben-Hadad would recover from his sickness if it were not for the fact that Hazael was going to kill him! The king was not going to die from the sickness – he was going to die from suffocation. He would be murdered.

At this point, Elisha stared at Hazael to the point where Hazael is embarrassed and ashamed, and then Elisha began to weep! He foresaw all the horrible things Hazael would do to the people of Israel when he became king over Syria. When Elisha began to tell these things to Hazael, Hazael protested vehemently. “No way I’m going to do those things. Do you think I’m a dog?” But sure enough, all that Elisha said came true. His wicked deeds started the very next day, when he took a thick cloth, dipped it in water and held it out over Ben-Hadad’s face so that he died. Hazael made it appear that the king had died of natural causes, from his illness. But Ben-Hadad had been suffocated.

Then Hazael reigned in his place. We will see how Elisha’s predictions come true. In 2 Kings 13:22 we read, “*Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.*”

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Unbelievers are definitely affected by a believer’s testimony.

Where do we see that taught in this section? Why did Ben-Hadad send Hazael to Elisha to “*inquire of the Lord by him, saying ‘Shall I recover from this disease?’*” This was King Ben-Hadad II. He certainly was no believer - and yet he referred to the God of Israel as “LORD.”

Why? I think Ben-Hadad was changed as a result of Naaman’s testimony. Remember General Naaman, who was healed of leprosy and returned to Syria? He was great witness to the power of the God of Israel, and I think that affected Ben-Hadad. Ben-Hadad was not a believer, but unbelievers are definitely affected by the testimony of a believer.

In chapter 5, we saw Ben-Hadad before he was affected by Naaman’s testimony. Do you remember? He sent a letter to King Jehoram of Israel: “*Now be advised when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy.*” No mention of the Lord there; no mention of the God of Israel. And we know from 2 Kings 5:18 that Ben-Hadad worshiped the pagan god Rimmon in that pagan deity’s temple. But there seemed to be a change. We’re not saying he had become a believer, but he referred to the God of Israel as LORD. And he sent Hazael to Elisha to find out whether or not he would recover. So it looks like Naaman’s testimony has been very effective in Syria. Unbelievers are definitely affected by a believer’s testimony.

Unfortunately, it looks like another’s believer’s testimony affected Ben-Hadad’s life too, but in a negative way. Why do you think Ben-Hadad thought he would get better service from Elisha if he sent him a big gift – forty camels loaded with gifts? Where did that idea come from? There’s no doubt it came from Gehazi’s actions - right?

We could call it “the Gehazi effect.” Could word have gotten around Syria that “Yes, Naaman was healed from his leprosy, but it cost him quite a bit of money!” Was that why Ben-Hadad thought the God of Israel could heal him – but it would cost him! So unbelievers are definitely affected by a believer’s testimony - in a good way or a bad way.

Unbelievers are affected by the testimonies of our lives and our words. There's a positive side, but there can also be a negative side. So let's make sure we have a good testimony! In Matthew 5:16 the Lord said, *"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* Unbelievers are definitely affected by a believer's testimony.

## **2. Biblical "ends" do not justify unbiblical "means."**

I think we see that point here as well. Hazael becoming king of Syria was a biblical end, because God had told that to Elijah back in 1 Kings 19:15. And God had now shown that to Elisha that Hazael would be king. *"The Lord had shown me that you will become king over Syria."* But for Hazael to take matters into his own hands and murder Ben-Hadad was an unbiblical means to an end. Biblical ends do not justify using unbiblical means.

But, you might say, "What would you expect? Hazael was an unbeliever!" Yes, that's true, but Christians sometimes fall into this trap of trying to use unbiblical means to accomplish biblical ends.

Here's an illustration: A few years ago a Christian couple came to me for counsel. They wanted to know if it was all right for them to get a "paper divorce" - get a legal divorce "on paper," but stay married before God! I said, "What? Why would you want to get a paper divorce?" They said, "Believe it or not, we would come out much better on our income tax if we file as singles. And then we would have more money to give to the Lord! But we're not really getting a divorce; we're just doing it on paper!"

What do you think I said? You're right! I said, "No way! Being good stewards of your money before the Lord – that's a good thing. That's a biblical end. But you don't use unbiblical means to accomplish that. Before God, you're married. It would be wrong to lie to the state about your marriage just to save your money, and make your tithe bigger!" Biblical ends do not justify unbiblical means.

## **Practical Applications**

### **1. Are you emotionally involved concerning the future?**

When Elisha realized what the future held, he wept. He foresaw that people in the northern kingdom of Israel would be brutally killed, including women and children. He wept, even though he knew that these people were unbelieving idol worshipers, and were really reaping what they had sown. But Elisha did not just see this situation as hard cold facts. He was emotionally involved about the future.

Are we emotionally involved about the future? We know that God's judgment is coming upon this world. Many will suffer and die. In the book of Revelation, it is calculated that as much as one half of the world population will die! Are we only

concerned about the cold hard facts for the future? Are we only interested in head knowledge about prophecy? Do we spend time speculating whether or not nuclear weapons are used under the Seal Judgments, and do the Trumpet Judgments overlap with the Bowl Judgments? Or are we struck with horror and pity for the vast amount of suffering?

It's important to interpret Scripture properly, but are these prophecies only facts to us? Or do we weep, as the Lord Jesus wept when He considered the judgment that would fall on unrepentant Jerusalem? *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. See your house is left to you desolate."* Do we have a tender heart like the Lord Jesus? Do we weep when we realize our non-Christian friends are going to hell if they don't receive Christ? Are we emotionally involved about the future?

## **2. Don't be deceived by the mask of an unbeliever.**

When Elisha told Hazael all the horrible things he would do to Israel as king of Syria, Hazael responded, "Who do you think I am? Am I a dog? No way will I do those gross things." What a mask! Hazael probably already knew what he would do to Ben-Hadad. Hazael gave the king only half the message: "You won't die from this illness." But the very next day he wasted no time in murdering his master! What a mask he was wearing!

Many unbelievers would have you think that they are good people. They'll tell you they'd never do anything really bad. As far as Hazael was concerned, Elisha had misread him. Unbelievers today want us to believe that we're misreading them, but we need to realize that unbelievers wear masks to cover up their true condition.

Jeremiah 17:9 says, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..."* Just last week I heard of an eighteen year old boy who, on the surface, looked like a great guy - but now it appears that for some time he's been sexually abusing his eleven-year-old sister. The heart is deceitful above all things.

We need to preach the gospel to everyone, even the people who are "nice" on the surface. They need the gospel message, just as much as those who obviously need it. If Christians wear masks, how much more do unbelievers wear masks? Don't be deceived by an unbeliever's mask. They need the gospel message!