

International Bible Lessons Commentary

2 Kings 8:1-6

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, July 22, 2012
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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, July 22, 2012**, is from **2 Kings 8:1-6**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at <http://InternationalBibleLessons.org> and in *The Oklahoman* newspaper.

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2 Kings 8:1-6

(2 Kings 8:1) Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, “Get up and go with your household, and settle wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and it will come on the land for seven years.”

Elisha, who served under Elijah the prophet, became one of Israel's greatest prophets after Elijah's death. He worked many miracles. God sometimes inspired Elisha to foretell the punishment that He intended to bring upon Israel for the sins of their kings and those in their kingdom who followed their kings' example in disobeying God. Elisha warned this godly woman so her household could escape God's punishment or discipline. Perhaps God found a way to warn all of the godly people, so the godly would not suffer God's discipline on the wicked, a discipline the godly did not need suffer.

In Luke 4:25-28, Jesus referred to Elijah, when God saved a widow from famine who was not of the land of Israel; and to Elisha, when God healed a leper who was not an Israelite. By doing so, Jesus enraged everyone in a synagogue, saying, “But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage.” In the two cases Jesus mentioned, these people were led to faith in and loyalty to the true God.

(2 Kings 8:2) So the woman got up and did according to the word of the man of God; she went with her household and settled in the land of the Philistines seven years.

The number seven means completeness or perfection. God intended to bring a perfect and complete punishment upon Israel and the king for their sins. We can remember how God brought seven years of plenty and seven years of famine in Egypt during the time of Jacob and his sons, and how God saved people from starvation by sending Joseph into Egypt to warn Pharaoh and to manage the food supply during the years of plenty and the years of famine (Genesis 41:29-30). The woman escaped to the land of Israel's enemies, where God did not bring famine.

(2 Kings 8:3) At the end of the seven years, when the woman returned from the land of the Philistines, she set out to appeal to the king for her house and her land.

These verses show God's ability to do all that He wants to accomplish in the lives of His people according to His perfect timing. The woman returned after seven years, because she believed the word of God told to her through the prophet Elisha that the famine would last for no more than seven years. During that time, others had taken her home and land, and she needed to appeal to the king for the return of her property. The woman had demonstrated her faith in God through her obedience, and God achieved the return of her land through the providential timing of her approach to the king while Gehazi, Elisha's servant, was telling the king about the miracle Elisha had worked in the woman's life.

(2 Kings 8:4) Now the king was talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done."

God inspired the woman to return at the exact time that Gehazi was with the king. God inspired Gehazi to go to the king (or God inspired the king to call for Gehazi) at that exact time. God probably created a sense of curiosity about God and Elisha in the mind of the king, and God inspired the king's question with perfect timing – we learn this from hindsight. The exact timing of the king's question and the arrival of Gehazi and the woman fulfill this truth from Proverbs: "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will" (Proverbs 21:1).

(2 Kings 8:5) While he was telling the king how Elisha had restored a dead person to life, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and her land. Gehazi said, "My lord king, here is the woman, and here is her son whom Elisha restored to life."

God inspired what stories Gehazi selected to tell the king and the timing of each story so Gehazi would be telling the woman's story at the exact moment the

woman would be coming into the king's presence to make her request. God worked in the lives of all of these people with such perfect timing that readers should be moved to glorify God and believe that God can work in their lives and help them too with perfect timing. God can work through godless leaders and people to help those who trust and obey Him.

(2 Kings 8:6) When the king questioned the woman, she told him. So the king appointed an official for her, saying, "Restore all that was hers, together with all the revenue of the fields from the day that she left the land until now."

Because the king recognized the miraculous hand of God in the woman's entire story (including the raising of her son from the dead – a resuscitation, not a resurrection, for he would die again later), he ordered not only that the land be restored to her but that whatever revenue her land had yielded during the drought be given to her as well. Remember how the story proves this fact: "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will" (Proverbs 21:1). Even if the king had refused to recognize God's hand in the woman's life, God could turn the king's heart to do His bidding. If we remember this verse of scripture from the Proverbs, we can pray with faith concerning the leaders of governments around the world and the needs of God's people in these governments and under these leaders.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why was the woman's obedience to God's word through Elisha essential to God saving her from the coming seven years of famine?
2. How is obeying God a sign of faith in God?
3. Why does true faith in God always lead to obeying God?
4. Do you think God still works providentially in the lives of His people today? Can you think of any examples of God's providential working in your own life or in the lives of others? Would you like to share your experience or experiences of God's providential working in your life with others?
5. What might happen to someone who settles someplace with the resolve never to move no matter what? What might you say to such a person who says this.

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