

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

III. The Latter Era Of The Divided Kingdom, 2 Kings 2:1-27:41

L. God's Care Of The Faithful Amid Widespread Apostasy

(2 Kings 8:1-6)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many believers know they live in an era of intense apostasy, or strong departure from God and righteousness. However, a believer's concern is often: "What is going to happen to **me** amid such intense apostasy and its effects?"

Considering the effects of such apostasy from just the human perspective, one has cause for concern:

(1) Apostasy leads us to face the threat of excessive tax increases: The Wall Street Journal Editorial Board December 24th in its piece, "The Blue State Challenge," claimed: "Democrats . . . in November seized complete control of state governments in California, Connecticut, Illinois and New York. They now own responsibility for fixing the dysfunctions of liberal governance even as the left wants more spending and taxes . . ." ("Quotable," Republican-American, December 28, 2018, p. 6A)

(2) We face growing lawlessness in society itself: "Manchester police . . . closed The Shoppes at Buckland Hills" December 26th "following a series of fights that may have involved 200 to 300 young people." (Ibid., p. 8A)

(3) We face growing apostasy in evangelical circles: "The Gospel Coalition is one movement influencing churches toward Cultural Marxism," an unbiblical ideology (Brannon Howse with guest writer Thomas Littleton, "The Trojan Horse; More Evangelical Deep State," March 29, 2018; thirtypiecesofsilver.org), but reputedly conservative evangelical leader John MacArthur partners in ministry with leaders of The Gospel Coalition in violation of second degree separation as taught in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. (Joshua Chavez, "Pulpit & Pen Covers Up John MacArthur's Deception," April 8, 2018; beginningofsorrows.org)

The prediction of the late spiritual giant A. W. Tozer in his work, The Dangers of Shallow Faith: Awakening From Spiritual Lethargy, chapter 1, seems so true. He wrote: "I see the time coming when all the holy men whose eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit will desert worldly evangelicalism, one by one. The house will be left desolate and there will not be a man of God, a man in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, left among them." ("A. W. Tozer: 'At The Brink of Apostasy,'" May 23, 2012; pjmillier.wordpress.com)

Need: *So we ask, "How do we handle the concern about what will happen to us amid growing, intense apostasy?"*

I. Because of intense apostasy in Israel, God called for a seven-year famine in the nation, 2 Kings 8:1b:

- A. The Mosaic Covenant under which Israel then lived predicted the nation would enjoy agricultural bounty if it obeyed God's Word but that it would face among other things famine for disobeying it, Deut. 28:1-14, 15-24.
- B. Since God was calling for a seven-year famine in Israel (2 Kings 8:1b), He was judging the nation for its sin.

II. However, the Shunammite woman whose son Elisha had raised from the dead was now a devout follower of God who obeyed God's Word through His messenger, the prophet Elisha (cf. 2 Kings 4:30-37), so she did not deserve God's punishment on the rest of the sinful nation.

III. The Lord thus directed the Shunammite woman through Elisha to live a life of faith in His provision as the means for escaping the hardships of His discipline on the nation Israel (as follows), 2 Kings 8:1a:

- A. Elisha told her about God's coming judgment of the famine on Israel, and because of that judgment, she was to take her family and go to some other nation and sojourn there until the famine ended, 2 Kings 8:1a.
- B. To leave her land in obedience to God's prophet, the Shunammite woman risked losing her property in her absence, and though the Law gave her the right to buy it back, under godless king Joram's rule over Israel, she risked not being able to redeem her property since Joram followed Jeroboam's false syncretism, not the Mosaic Law in its purity and divine authority, cf. 2 Kings 3:1-3; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p 552.

IV. The Shunammite woman thus chose to sojourn by faith in Philistia, a sensible choice, 2 Kings 8:2:

- A. Her choice of sojourning in Philistia was a sensible one in view of the nature of famines in the area:
 - 1. Famines in Israel resulted from a lack of rain, but Philistine territory was bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea that provided ample dew for crops, Zon. Pict. Enc. Bib., v. Four, p. 580.
 - 2. Besides, Philistine territory contained "heavy alluvial soil" for crop production, Ibid., p. 768, so Philistine territory would likely be the last territory in that part of the Middle East to face a famine.
- B. Even if Philistia itself faced a famine, the Shunammite's choice of that land was sensible since it had access to food by sea imports. (Albert Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible, 2 Kings 8:2 in studylight.org/commentaries)

- V. Accordingly, God rewarded the Shunammite woman's faith in extraordinary ways, 2 Kings 8:3-6:**
- A. ***God sovereignly controlled the least likely people to address the Shunammite woman's needs, 2 Kings 8:4a:***
 1. When the famine ended, as the Shunammite woman approached king Joram to plead for her house and land, he was speaking with Gehazi (2 Kings 8:3-4a), two of the least likely people to help her:
 - a. The prophet Elisha whom this widow closely obeyed as God's messenger had publicly critiqued Joram, telling him in the presence of good king Jehoshaphat that were Jehoshaphat not present, Elisha would not even look at Joram due to his wickedness, 2 Kings 3:13-14.
 - b. Elisha had also judged his former servant Gehazi to be struck with Naaman's leprosy for lusting after the riches Naaman offered and thus violating the testimony that God had healed Naaman, 2 Kings 5:20-27.
 - c. Thus, from the human viewpoint, apostate king Joram and punished Gehazi were the least likely men to want to help a woman who closely followed Elisha, a man who had dealt so negatively with both men!
 - B. ***God sovereignly controlled the least likely conversation among those men to meet the woman's needs:*** king Joram was speaking with Gehazi about Elisha's great miracles, the least likely conversation both men would be expected to have in view of Elisha's negative critiques about both of them to their faces, 2 Kings 8:4b!
 - C. ***God sovereignly controlled the precise timing of events in that conversation to meet her needs:*** just as the Shunammite woman was approaching the king to beg for her house and property, king Joram and Gehazi were discussing the specific, great miracle of Elisha's raising of that woman's son from the dead, 2 Kings 8:5-6a!
 - D. ***God thus sovereignly met all the needs the Shunammite desired plus much more, 2 Kings 8:6b,c,d:***
 1. King Joram was impressed by the timing of the woman's arrival and his topic of conversation with Gehazi, so he asked her to expand on the details of Elisha's raising of her son, 2 Kings 8:6b; *Ibid.*, B. K. C., O. T.
 2. The Shunammite thus told the king her full story about the event, 2 Kings 8:6c.
 3. Impressed by all this, Joram ordered that her house and property be restored in accord with her petition, but that also all the produce of her property during her seven years of absence be restored to her, 2 Kings 8:6d! In this way, the financial expense of sojourning in Philistia for seven years was reimbursed to her so that the Shunammite woman did not suffer loss due to God's judgment on apostate Israel!

Lesson: *When God chose to punish Israel's sin, since the Shunammite woman was innocent, the Lord had her live by faith in His provision so that as she obeyed Him, she both avoided His punishment and saw all her needs met.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation from sin, John 3:16. (2) As believers who live in an apostate era, (a) may we follow God's Biblical leading, (b) using common sense in the details as did the Shunammite, and (c) see God richly provide for our every need, be it (i) financial, (ii) relational, etc. as He did for the Shunammite.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

God's provision for our every need as a Church in our era of apostasy has occurred in many ways, but one of the most poignant ones occurred with His provision of B. B. Warfield's book, Calvin and Augustine, reprint, 1956 (Pres. and Ref. Pub. Co., 1974). A missionary we once supported had donated it to our Church library!

Until viewing this book, I had long struggled to understand how Augustine had ever come to think the Bible taught God gave man an immediate gift of faith to believe, that God thus chose who could even trust in Christ. John Calvin and others had adopted Augustine's view, so I needed to check Augustine's writings to understand his thinking. Yet, I could not afford the library of Church fathers containing his works, so I was left with my unanswered question!

God's provision of B. B. Warfield's book in our Church library supplied the answer: on page 378, Warfield cited Augustine where he explained that he had been moved to adopt his view of faith as God's gift "especially by" the words of 1 Corinthians 4:7 where Paul had asked, "(W)hat hast thou that thou didst not receive? . . ." Augustine had concluded that Paul there meant the believer's faith in Christ itself was an immediate gift from God.

Yet, the context shows the gifts of God there are spiritual gifts for service (1 Cor. 1:4-9; Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 513), not faith in Christ for salvation, and nowhere in 1 Corinthians 4 is faith in Christ even discussed! Thus, Augustine's paganistic, Neo-Platonic view of man (Edwin A. Blum, "Augustine: The Bishop and Theologian," Bib. Sac., Jan.-Mar. 1981, p. 66) where man is pantheistically an extension of God, affected his beliefs: since he held that man is pantheistically just an extension of God, Augustine readily concluded that God authored man's faith in Christ.

What a relief it was to discover that error in Augustine -- decades of theological unrest had finally ended!

I was thus more assured about what I taught you, that Augustine erred, and that man authored his own faith!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. May we then follow God's Biblical leading, using common sense in the details of life that He assigns us, and see Him supply all we need regardless what we face in apostate times!