
2KINGS 8: 1 Now Elisha had spoken to the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, "Arise, and go, you and your household, and stay for a while wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine. It shall also come on the land seven years."

Account of the sojourning of the Shunammite in the land of the Philistines, during the seven years famine, 2Kgs 8:1, 2Kgs 8:2. She returns, and solicits the king to let her have back her land; which, with its fruits, he orders to be restored to her, 2Kgs 8:3-6. Elisha comes to Damascus, and finds Ben-hadad sick; who sends his servant Hazeal to the prophet to inquire whether he shall recover, 2Kgs 8:7-9. Elisha predicts his death, tells Hazeal that he shall be king, and shows him the atrocities he will commit, 2Kgs 8:10-14. Hazeal returns, stifles his master with a wet cloth, and reigns in his stead, 2Kgs 8:15. Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, becomes king over Judah; his bad reign, 2Kgs 8:16-19. Edom and Libnah revolt, 2Kgs 8:20-22. Jehoram dies, and his son Ahaziah reigns in his stead, 2Kgs 8:23, 2Kgs 8:24. His bad reign, 2Kgs 8:25-27. He joins with Joram, son of Ahab, against Hazeal; Joram is wounded by the Syrians, and goes to Jezreel to be healed, 2Kgs 8:28, 2Kgs 8:29.

Verse 1

Then spake Elisha - As this is the relation of an event far past, the words should be translated, "But Elisha had spoken unto the woman whose son he had restored unto life; and the woman had arisen, and acted according to the saying of the man of God, and had gone with her family, and had sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years." What is mentioned in these two verses happened several years before the time specified in the third verse. See the observations at the end of the preceding chapter, 2Kgs 7:17 (note).

2KINGS 8: 2 The woman arose, and did according to the word of the man of God. She went with her household, and lived in the land of the Philistines seven years.

2KINGS 8: 3 At the seven years' end, the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines. Then she went out to cry to the king for her house and for her land.

2KINGS 8: 4 Now the king was talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, "Please tell me all the great things that Elisha has done."

Verse 4

The king talked with Gehazi - This is supposed to have happened before the cleansing of Naaman, for is it likely that the king would hold conversation with a leprous man; or that, knowing Gehazi had been dismissed with the highest disgrace from the prophet's service, he could hold any conversation with him concerning his late master, relative to whom he could not expect him to give either a true or impartial account?

Some think that this conversation might have taken place after Gehazi became leprous; the king having an insatiable curiosity to know the private history of a man who had done such astonishing things: and from whom could he get this information, except from the prophet's own confidential servant? It agrees better with the chronology to consider what is here related as having taken place

after the cure of Naaman. As to the circumstance of Gehazi's disease, he might overlook that, and converse with him, keeping at a reasonable distance, as nothing but actual contact could defile.

2KINGS 8: 5 As he was telling the king how he had restored to life him who was dead, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life."

Verse 5

This is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life - This was a very providential occurrence in behalf of the Shunammite. The relation given by Gehazi was now corroborated by the woman herself; the king was duly affected, and gave immediate orders for the restoration of her land.

2KINGS 8: 6 When the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed to her a certain officer, saying, "Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now."

2KINGS 8: 7 Elisha came to Damascus; and Benhadad the king of Syria was sick. It was told him, saying, "The man of God has come here."

Verse 7

Elisha came to Damascus - That he might lead Gehazi to repentance; according to Jarchi and some others.

2KINGS 8: 8 The king said to Hazael, "Take a present in your hand, and go, meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, 'Will I recover from this sickness?'"

Verse 8

Take a present in thine hand - But what an immense present was this-forty camels' burden of every good thing of Damascus! The prophet would need to have a very large establishment at Damascus to dispose of so much property.

2KINGS 8: 9 So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him, and said, "Your son Benhadad king of Syria has sent me to you, saying, 'Will I recover from this sickness?'"

2KINGS 8: 10 Elisha said to him, "Go, tell him, 'You shall surely recover;' however the LORD has shown me that he shall surely die."

Verse 10

Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die - That is, God has not determined thy death, nor will it be a necessary consequence of the disease by which thou art now afflicted; but this wicked man will abuse the power and trust thou hast reposed in him, and take away thy life. Even when God has not designed nor appointed the death of a person, he may nevertheless die, though not without the permission of God. This is a farther proof of the doctrine of contingent events: he might live for all his sickness, but thou wilt put an end to his life.

2KINGS 8: 11 He settled his gaze steadfastly on him, until he was ashamed. Then the man of God wept.

Verse 11

He settled his countenance steadfastly - Of whom does the author speak? Of Hazael, or of Elisha? Several apply this action to the prophet: he had a murderer before him and he saw the bloody acts he was about to commit, and was greatly distressed; but he endeavored to conceal his feelings: at last his face reddened with anguish, his feelings overcame him, and he burst out and wept.

The Septuagint, as it stands in the Complutensian and Antwerp Polyglots, makes the text very plain: Και ἔστη Ἀζαήλ κατα πρῶσπον αὐτοῦ, καὶ παρεθηκεν ἐνωπιον αὐτοῦ δῶρα, ἕως ἥσυχυνετο· καὶ ἐκλαυσεν ὁ ἀνθρώπος τοῦ Θεοῦ, And Hazael stood before his face, and he presented before him gifts till he was ashamed; and the man of God wept.

The Codex Vaticanus, and the Codex Alexandrinus, are nearly as the Hebrew. The Aldine edition agrees in some respects with the Complutensian; but all the versions follow the Hebrew.

2KINGS 8: 12 Hazael said, "Why do you weep, my lord?" He answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel. You will set their strongholds on fire, and you will kill their young men with the sword, and will dash in pieces their little ones, and rip up their women with child."

Verse 12

I know the evil that thou wilt do - We may see something of the accomplishment of this prediction, 2Kgs 10:32, 2Kgs 10:33; 2Kgs 13:3, 2Kgs 13:7.

2KINGS 8: 13 Hazael said, "But what is your servant, who is but a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Elisha answered, "The LORD has shown me that you will be king over Syria."

Verse 13

But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great things - I believe this verse to be wrongly interpreted by the general run of commentators. It is generally understood that Hazael was struck with horror at the prediction; that these cruelties were most alien from his mind; that he then felt

distressed and offended at the imputation of such evils to him; and yet, so little did he know his own heart, that when he got power, and had opportunity, he did the whole with a willing heart and a ready hand. On the contrary, I think he was delighted at the prospect; and his question rather implies a doubt whether a person so inconsiderable as he is shall ever have it in his power to do such great, not such evil things; for, in his sight, they had no turpitude. The Hebrew text stands thus: כִּי יַעֲשֶׂה הַדָּבָר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה ki mah abdecha hakkeleb, ki yaaseh haddabar haggadol hazzeh? "But, what! thy servant, this dog! that he should do this great work!" Or, "Can such a poor, worthless fellow, such a dead dog, [ὁ κυων ὁ τεθνηκως, Sept.], perform such mighty actions? thou fillest me with surprise." And that this is the true sense, his immediate murder of his master on his return fully proves. "Our common version of these words of Hazael," as Mr. Patten observes, "has stood in the front of many a fine declamation utterly wide of his real sentiment. His exclamation was not the result of horror; his expression has no tincture of it; but of the unexpected glimpse of a crown! The prophet's answer is plainly calculated to satisfy the astonishment he had excited. A dog bears not, in Scripture, the character of a cruel, but of a despicable animal; nor does he who is shocked with its barbarity call it a Great deed." - David Vindicated.

2KINGS 8: 14 Then he departed from Elisha, and came to his master, who said to him, "What did Elisha say to you?" He answered, "He told me that you would surely recover."

2KINGS 8: 15 On the next day, he took a thick cloth, dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died. Then Hazael reigned in his place.

Verse 15

A thick cloth - The versions, in general, understand this of a hairy or woollen cloth.

So that he died - He was smothered, or suffocated.

2KINGS 8: 16 In the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being king of Judah then, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign.

Verse 16

In the fifth year of Joram - This verse, as it stands in the present Hebrew text, may be thus read: "And in the fifth year of Joram son of Ahab king of Israel, [and of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah], reigned Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah." The three Hebrew words, וִיהוֹשָׁפָט מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה, and of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, greatly disturb the chronology in this place. It is certain that Jehoshaphat reigned twenty-five years, and that Jehoram his son reigned but eight; 1Kgs 22:42; 2Kgs 8:17; 2Chr 20:31; 2Chr 21:5. So that he could not have reigned during his father's life without being king twenty years, and eight years! These words are wanting in three of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS. in the Complutensian and Aldine editions of the Septuagint, in the Peshito Syriac, in the Parisian Heptapler Syriac, the Arabic, and in many copies of the Vulgate, collated by Dr. Kennicott and De Rossi, both printed and manuscript; to which may be added two MSS. in my own library, one of the fourteenth, the other of the eleventh century, and in what I judge to be the Editio Princeps of the Vulgate. And it is worthy of remark that in this latter work, after the fifteenth verse, ending with

Quo mortuo regnavit Azahel pro eo, the following words are in a smaller character, Anno quinto Joram filii Achab regis Israhel, regnavit Joram filius Josaphat rex Juda. Triginta, etc. We have already seen that it is supposed that Jehoshaphat associated his son with him in the kingdom; and that the fifth year in this place only regards Joram king of Israel, and not Jehoshaphat king of Judah. See the notes on 2Kgs 1:17.

2KINGS 8: 17 He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign. He reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

Verse 17

He reigned eight years in Jerusalem - Beginning with the fifth year of Joram, king of Israel. He reigned three years with Jehoshaphat his father, and five years alone; i.e., from A.M. 3112 to 3119, according to Archbishop Usher.

2KINGS 8: 18 He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab as wife. He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Verse 18

The daughter of Ahab was his wife - This was the infamous Athaliah; and through this marriage Jehoshaphat and Ahab were confederates; and this friendship was continued after Ahab's death.

2KINGS 8: 19 However the LORD would not destroy Judah, for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give to him a lamp for his children always.

Verse 19

To give him alway a light - To give him a successor in his own family.

2KINGS 8: 20 In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves.

2KINGS 8: 21 Then Joram passed over to Zair, and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and struck the Edomites who surrounded him, and the captains of the chariots; and the people fled to their tents.

Verse 21

Joram went over to Zair - This is the same as Seir, a chief city of Idumea. So Isa 21:11 : The burden of Dumah (Idumea). He calleth to me out of Seir.

Smote the Edomites - It appears that the Israelites were surrounded by the Idumeans; and that in the night Joram and his men cut their way through them, and so got every man to his tent, for they were not able to make any farther head against these enemies; and therefore it is said, that Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day.

2KINGS 8: 22 So Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah to this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time.

2KINGS 8: 23 The rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

Verse 23

Are they not written in the book of the chronicles - Several remarkable particulars relative to Joram may be found in 2 Chron. 21.

2KINGS 8: 24 Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

2KINGS 8: 25 In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign.

2KINGS 8: 26 Twenty-two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah the daughter of Omri king of Israel.

Verse 26

Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign - In 2Chr 22:2, it is said, forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; this is a heavy difficulty, to remove which several expedients have been used. It is most evident that, if we follow the reading in Chronicles, it makes the son two years older than his own father! for his father began to reign when he was thirty-two years old, and reigned eight years, and so died, being forty years old; see 2Kgs 8:17. Dr. Lightfoot says, "The original meaneth thus: Ahaziah was the son of two and forty years; namely, of the house of Omri, of whose seed he was by the mother's side; and he walked in the ways of that house, and came to ruin at the same time with it. This the text directs us to look after, when it calleth his mother the daughter of Omri, who was indeed the daughter of Ahab. Now, these forty-two years are easily reckoned by any that will count back in the Chronicle to the second of Omri. Such another reckoning there is about Jechoniah, or Jehoiachin, 2Kgs 24:8 : Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign. But, 2Chr 36:9, Jehoiachin was the son of the eight years; that is, the beginning of his reign fell in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar, and of Judah's first captivity." - Works, vol. i., p. 87.

After all, here is a most manifest contradiction, that cannot be removed but by having recourse to violent modes of solution. I am satisfied the reading in 2Chr 22:2 (note), is a mistake; and that we should read there, as here, twenty-two instead of forty-two years; see the note there. And may we not say with Calmet, Which is most dangerous, to acknowledge that transcribers have made some

mistakes in copying the sacred books, or to acknowledge that there are contradictions in them, and then to have recourse to solutions that can yield no satisfaction to any unprejudiced mind? I add, that no mode of solution yet found out has succeeded in removing the difficulty; and of all the MSS. which have been collated, and they amount to several hundred, not one confirms the reading of twenty-two years. And to it all the ancient versions are equally unfriendly.

2KINGS 8: 27 He walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab; for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab.

2KINGS 8: 28 He went with Joram the son of Ahab to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth Gilead: and the Syrians wounded Joram.

Verse 28

The Syrians wounded Joram - Ahaziah went with Joram to endeavor to wrest Ramoth-gilead out of the hands of the Syrians, which belonged to Israel and Judah. Ahab had endeavored to do this before, and was slain there; see 1Kgs 22:3 (note), etc., and the notes there.

2KINGS 8: 29 King Joram returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

Verse 29

Went back to be healed in Jezreel - And there he continued till Jehu conspired against and slew him there. And thus the blood of the innocents, which had been shed by Ahab and his wife Jezebel, was visited on them in the total extinction of their family. See the following chapters, where the bloody tale of Jehu's conspiracy is told at large.

I Have already had to remark on the chronological difficulties which occur in the historical books; difficulties for which copyists alone are responsible. To remove them by the plan of reconciliation, is in many cases impracticable; to conjectural criticism we must have recourse. And is there a single ancient author of any kind, but particularly those who have written on matters of history and chronology, whose works have been transmitted to us free of similar errors, owing to the negligence of transcribers?