

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #86

"Election of Dying Infants - A Mother's Testimony" (Scriptures from NKJV)

Matthew 18:14 -

Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

INTRODUCTION: This is the seventh lesson in the sub-series on the "Election of Dying Infants." It is entitled "A Mother's Testimony." In the previous two lessons, I began to address why the Scriptures appear to be so silent on the subject relating to the destiny of dying infants. This silence is the reason why so many adopt the "we don't know" view of what the destiny of dying infants shall be. I am taking the position that the silence is what reveals the answer to the question. Since the question has been raised millions of times, especially by mothers who have lost an infant or a child, the question arose in my own mind as to why we never have the question raised by a mother in the Bible? Why do we not have one example of a mother going to either Moses or one of the prophets, or to Jesus or one of the apostles, and asking the question, "where is my infant who has died?" Could it be, rather than concluding that the silence is telling us that God does not want us to know the answer, that the silence contains the answer! That being, that it is a given revelation that all infants dying in infancy are saved and go to heaven upon their death.

We are now in the process of gathering scriptural data containing the testimonies of people who have had to personally face the issue. We have looked at David and the loss of his son. We called this the "Silent Testimony." David was assured of his son's destiny only after the little one had died. How could he have this knowledge unless he understood that it was a given revelation that all infants dying in infancy go to heaven? It was only by believing this that he could conclude that his son was included in that number. Then we looked at Job's desire to have died in his mother's womb so he could have been free from pain and have peace in his soul. How could he have believed this would have occurred if he did not believe that all infants dying in infancy are saved and go to heaven?

In this present lesson, we will look at "A Mother's Testimony" concerning the death and destiny of her dead child. The material will be primarily taken from the account given in II Kings 4:8-37. It involves an event taken from the life of Elisha in which he raises a child from the dead. The child's mother was known as a Shunammite, whose personal name is not given.

A. THE NARRATIVE UNFOLDS - II Kings 4:8-37

1. The text reads as follows:

Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food. So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some

food. And she said to her husband, "Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly. Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there."

And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there. Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite woman." When he had called her, she stood before him. And he said to him, "Say now to her, 'Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?'"

She answered, "I dwell among my own people."

So he said, "What then is to be done for her?"

And Gehazi answered, "Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old."

So he said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. Then he said, "About this time next year you shall embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!" But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her. And the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. And he said to his father, "My head, my head!" So he said to a servant, "Carry him to his mother." When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out. Then she called to her husband, and said, "Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back."

So he said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath." And she said, "It is well." Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, "Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you." And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, "Look, the Shunammite woman! Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?'" And she answered, "It is well." Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away. But the man of God

said, "Let her alone; for her soul is in deep distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me, and has not told me."

So she said, "Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?" Then he said to Gehazi, "Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child." And the mother of the child said, "As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So he arose and followed her. Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him, saying, "The child has not awakened."

When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord. And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm. He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite woman." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Pick up your son." So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out.

2. The story unfolds as follows:

On the northern edge of the Plain of Esdraelon, north of Jezreel and east of Mt. Carmel, was a little town named Shunem. The prophet Elisha quite often passed through this town while performing his duties as a prophet. There lived in this town a "notable" or "great" woman who was married to a man of substantial wealth. She became acquainted with Elisha and considered him a holy man of God. She asked her husband if they might add a small upper room where Elisha could stay when he was in the area, and her husband agreed. Elisha asked if there was not some way he could repay her, and she replied that she was well to do and needed nothing. Elisha's servant, whose name was Gehazi, reminded him that the couple was old and did not have a son.

Elisha then promised that within the next year, she would bear a son, and this came to pass as predicted. The child grew to the age where he could be taken to the harvest field with his father. There is a question regarding the age of the child brought about by a variance of translations found in the more reliable translations. Some say the child was "grown," implying perhaps he was a youth. Others say the child "grew." The

question is easily reconciled in II Kings 4:20, 21 when after the child's illness and death, we read, **"When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out."** Note that **"he sat on her knees"** (lap) indicating he was yet a small child, and also that **"she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God"** (indicating that he was still small enough for her to carry him up a flight of stairs).

While the child was in the fields with his father, he complained that his head was hurting him. He probably suffered a sunstroke and went into a coma. His father, thinking that he would probably be alright, had one of his servants carry him to his mother's house. She cared for him by holding him on her lap, but he took a turn for the worse and soon died before noon. She immediately rushed to Mt. Carmel (about ten miles to the west) to seek out Elisha. She conveyed her grief to Elisha and he sent his servant to her house. He laid Elisha's staff on the face of the dead child, but to no avail. Then Elisha arrived at the house. Upon seeing the dead child, he shut the door to be alone. He then prayed and laid himself on the child's lifeless body. The child's body began to become warm. Then he got up and walked back and forth in the house, after which he repeated the procedure. The child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. Elisha then called for the child's mother to come and pick up her son.

There have been some who have questioned whether the child was truly dead or only in a coma. The text clearly reads that the child actually died. The following verses confirm this to be the case. Chapter 4:20 says, **"he sat on her knees till noon, and then died."** In 4:32 we read **"there was the child, lying dead on his bed."** Also in 8:4,5 we find Gehazi talking to the king at a later date. **"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.'"**

3. Further confirmation of the child's death.

Elisha had served under his mentor whose name was Elijah. Elijah also had raised a child from the dead. He was the son of the widow of Zarephath. The incident is recorded in I Kings 17:17-24. Elijah used the same procedure which Elisha would repeat. In verses 21-23 we read, **"And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the Lord and said, 'O Lord my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him.' Then the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child**

came back to him, and he revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, 'See, your son lives!'" Some translations say that the child "**lived again**" and others "**the child's life returned.**" The KJV, along with the NKJV, say that "**the child's soul came into him again.**" These two miracles are recorded in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews where we read in Hebrews 11:35, "**Women received their dead raised to life again.**" Both children actually died and were raised from the dead.

B. THE QUESTION BEFORE US.

The question before us is this: were these two small children elect or reprobate? Did either one experience pain and torment in hell during the time period between their death and resurrection?

1. Elisha's three questions and the widow's answers.

The answer to these questions can be obtained by examining Elisha's three questions to the woman and her reply. Upon realizing that her child had died, the woman made a hurried trip to Mt. Carmel to find Elisha. Elisha sees her coming from afar off, and sends Gehazi to meet her, and immediately asks her three questions. They were,

First: "**Is it well with you?**"

Second: "**Is it well with your husband?**"

Third: "**Is it well with the child?**"

She answered, "**It is well.**"

a. First, in reference to herself, she replies, "**it is well.**" Even though she is filled with grief over her loss, she is consoled with the workings of God in her life. There are times when the providence of God may disappoint us, but the promises of God will never fail us. Note: Life's disappointments come to us by God's appointments! The expression, "**it is well**" conveys that one has a composure of peace and tranquility even though shaken in the midst of life's storms.

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea-billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*
(Horatio G. Spafford)

b. Secondly, in reference to her husband, she again replies "**it is well.**" She, along with her husband, were old in years and experiencing the frailties which accompany old age. Yet her husband could still oversee the workers in the harvest fields. He was supported by a culture which provided him peace and security. Both he and his wife were financially stable, and he could provide for his family. It was well with his soul.

c. Thirdly, in reference to her child. She knew that her son was dead, yet she was not preparing for his funeral. She had laid him upon the prophet's bed with a hope that Elisha might raise him up like Elijah had done for the widow of Zarephath. Even though her son was dead for the present, she was at peace as to his well-being. She was not a liberal Israelite like the Sadducees who denied the resurrection of the dead. Thus, she would also affirm the immortality of the soul. So when she said, **"it is well with the child,"** she believed that the child was enjoying a life of freedom from pain and torment. Now, how could she be assured of that? It was only by believing that all infants, children and moral incompetents who die in such a state are elect and go to heaven or paradise where the dying thief was promised he would go by none other than Jesus Himself. The Apostle Paul states in II Corinthians 5:8, **"We are confident I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."** Note: This was not a New Covenant revelation given to Paul, but was what he knew from the Old Testament Scriptures.

2. A question for those who still hold to the "we don't know" view concerning the destiny of dead infants. Where did the child's immortal soul exist between the time of its death and resurrection? Heaven or Hell? In a place of bliss or torment? If the grieving mother had come to you and asked you to tell her where the soul of her young child was, what would you have said? Would you dare to say, "Well, we just don't know!" Would this not raise suspicions in her mind about the wellness of the child? Would this not rob her of her assurance that the child, though dead in body, was well off in its soul? There is no way she could have said regarding the welfare of the child, **"It is well."** And there is no way she could have been assured of the happiness of her little son, unless she could be assured that all infants who die in infancy are elect and spared from eternal torment upon their death in the body.

Charles Spurgeon, in his famous sermon on Infant Salvation, comments on the text in II Kings 4:26. **"Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?' And she answered, 'It is well.'"**

Then came the question about her child, it was dead at home, and the enquiry would renew her griefs, "Is it well with the child?" Yet she said, "It is well," perhaps so answering because she had a faith that soon it should be restored to her, and that its temporary absence was well; or I think rather because she was persuaded that whatever might have become of its spirit, it was safe in the keeping of God, happy beneath the shadow of his wings. Therefore, not fearing that it was lost, having no suspicion whatever that it was cast away from the place of bliss—for that suspicion would have quite prevented her giving such answer—she said "Yes, the child is dead, but "it is well."

How could anyone raise the possibility that the child could have been a non-elect or reprobate child? The child was God's gift to the parents in response to the man of God's

prayer! Professor R. A. Webb, D.D. makes this observation:

To grant a reprobate child in response to prayer would be worse than giving a stone instead of bread, and it were better that a reprobate child be not raised from the dead. (Webb. *Theology of Infant Salvation*, p. 24, Sprinkle Publications).

C. CLOSING EXHORTATIONS

I have stated at the outset of this series, that one of my reasons for addressing this subject, is to give comfort to grieving parents who have lost an infant or a child.

1. Believing Parents.

I wish to first say some words to believing parents who have lost a child, whether within or without the womb.

a. First, your child is with your Lord in heaven. You need not sorrow as one who has no hope. If you could but pull aside the veil which prevents us from looking into the unseen world of heaven, you would see your little one existing in a state of perfected bliss, absent from all pain and sorrow. He or she may have lived but a few years, months, weeks, days, hours, or even a few seconds, but now it lives in happiness for all eternity. He or she was spared from a life of sin.

b. Secondly, your child was spared from a life of bodily pain and earthly sorrow. When you meet your little one in heaven, it will be a happy reunion day. I cannot tell you what your child's body will appear to be in the resurrection, but I can say that then you will say, "O Happy Day, Oh Happy Day, when the Lord took my child away!" I urge you to think often on this reality. When asked how many children a certain woman had, she replied five; four alive on earth and one alive in heaven!

2. Unbelieving parents.

I have a brief word to you who are unbelieving parents who have lost an infant or a child in death. Perhaps you have lost several through a miscarriage or miscarriages. Your child is in heaven today, but you are lost and unsaved here on earth. Do you realize that you will never see your child or children if you die in an unsaved state? I present to you the following to consider from the words of Mr. Spurgeon in his sermon on *Infant Salvation*, on the text in II Kings 4:26.

The next and perhaps more useful and profitable inference to be drawn from the text is this: many of you are parents who have children in heaven. Is it not a desirable thing that you should go there, too? And yet have I not some, perhaps many, in this audience and in this area, who have no hope of the hereafter? In fact, you have left that which is beyond the grave to be thought of another day, you have given all your time and thoughts to the short, brief,

and unsatisfactory pursuits of mortal life. Mother--unconverted mother, from the battlements of heaven your child beckons you to Paradise. Father--ungodly, impenitent father, the little eyes that once looked joyously on you, look down upon you now, and the lips which had scarcely learned to call you father, before they were sealed by the silence of death, may be heard as with a still small voice, saying to you this morning, "Father, must we be forever divided by the great gulf which no man can pass?" Does not nature itself put a kind of longing in your soul that you may be bound in the bundle of life with your own children? Then stop and think. As you are at present, you cannot hope for that; for your way is sinful, you have forgotten Christ, you have not repented of sin, you have loved the wages of iniquity. I pray thee go to your chamber this morning and think of yourself as being driven from your little ones, banished forever from the presence of God, cast "where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched." If you wilt think of these matters, perhaps your heart will begin to move, and your eyes may begin to flow, and then may the Holy Spirit put before your eyes the cross of the Savior, the holy child Jesus! And remember, if you will turn your eyes to Him, you shall live: if you believe on Him with all your heart, you shall be with Him where He is,--with all those whom the Father gave Him who have gone before. You need not to be shut out. Will you sign your own doom, and write your own death warrant? Neglect not this great salvation, but may the grace of God work with you to make you seek, for you shall find--to make you knock, for the door shall be opened--to make you ask, for he that asks shall receive! O might I take you by the hand--perhaps you have come from a newly-made grave, or left the child at home dead, and God has made me a messenger to you this morning; O might I take you by the hand and say, "We cannot bring him back again, the spirit is gone beyond recall, but you may follow!" Behold the ladder of light before you! The first step upon it is repentance, out of yourself the next step is faith, into Christ, and when you are there, you are fairly and safely on your way, and before long you shall be received at heaven's gates by those very little ones who have gone before, that they may come to welcome you when you should land upon the eternal shores.