

**II KINGS**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Kings chapter 6 as we continue our study through the Word of God. In our last study we saw that the Syrian king, Ben-Hadad II was planning on making war with the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and every time he came up with a plan, the king of Israel knew what he was going to do. It was so bad that Ben-Hadad II thought there was a spy in his camp but the reality was, Elisha was telling the king in Israel, Jehoram where the Syrian army was camping.

Thus, Ben-Hadad II sends out a great army to capture Elisha, one man. And when you think about it, if Elisha knew the plans of the Syrian's before, won't he know them now? Of course he would but that did not stop Ben-Hadad II from going to capture Elisha, who was in Dothan. As the army surrounds Elisha, the Syrian army is blinded and Elisha takes them back to Israel, before the king and their eyes are opened and there is this time of peace between Israel and Syria now. But that peace is going to end quickly as we will see this evening, as the Syrians are planning a major invasion in Israel and as they besiege this city of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, there will be a great famine. With that said, let's begin reading in II Kings chapter 6, starting in verse 24 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

**II KINGS 6****VERSES 24-25**

1. Samaria, like most capital cities were walled cities to protect the kings and the people from invasion by other nations. Thus, what the enemy would do is they would surround the city and seal it off. By doing that you would cut off their food supply and eventually they would starve to death or open the gates and surrender. That is what the Syrian army did to Samaria. And the famine was so bad that they would sell a donkey's head for eighty shekels of silver. I don't know if you ever had a donkey's head before but it tastes like chicken! No, I have no clue what it would taste like and I don't want to find out. And it gets even worse than that. Dove droppings were also expensive. Now some say it was not dove droppings but beans. When you look at the depth of this famine, I think it was dove droppings! So things are not going well for the Northern Kingdom and it will get even worse as we will see in a minute.

2. We are given a little more information from history on how these sieges were, the famine that came upon the nation that was surrounded, cut off from a food supply. Josephus, in *The Wars of the Jews*, during the times of the Romans, tells us, “. . . Wheat was sold for a talent; and that when, a while afterward, it was not possible to gather herbs, by reason the city was walled about, some persons were driven to that terrible distress as to search the common sewers and old dung hills of cattle, and to eat the dung which they got there; and what they of old could not endure so much as to see they now used for food.” (*The Wars of the Jews*, V 13.7).

VERSES 26-27

1. Here is this poor woman crying out to her king for help and he basically tells her, “Look lady, I can’t help you. If God can’t help you what do you think I can do? You are out of luck lady!” Now that was true for Jehoram because he was not seeking the God of Israel and thus, as we are going to see, these things came upon them for their idolatry! Now, why was she crying out to the king, what was so heavy upon her heart? Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 28-29

1. Are you kidding me? These two women decided to eat their sons to save their lives. And as this woman cooked her son and ate him, she wanted the other woman to do the same and now she is refusing and this woman is upset! Folk’s, as hard as this is to believe, it is amazing what people will do when they are starving to death. In fact, Josephus again records this time of Roman persecution and he tells us, “. . . She slew her son, and then roasted him, and ate the one half of him, and kept the other half by her concealed.” (The Wars of the Jews, VI 3.4).

2. Now as you read of that you may be wondering why God allowed this to happen to His people. Please understand that this all came about because they turned from the Lord and what God promised would happen if they did turn from Him, came to pass just as He said.

We are told in Deuteronomy chapter 28, starting in verse 52 of the consequences of turning from the Lord, He warned them but they didn't listen. Thus, we are told, **“They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land; and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which the Lord your God has given you. You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you. The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the rest of his children whom he leaves behind, so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness and sensitivity, will refuse to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and her daughter, her placenta which comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of everything in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD.”** Deuteronomy 28:52-58. These terrors came upon Israel for one reason, they disobeyed the Lord, they turned from Him, they rejected Him and the covenant that He had made with them. God warned them but they did not listen!

VERSES 30-31

1. As the king hears what this woman is saying he tore his clothes and underneath them the people saw that he was wearing sackcloth, a sign of mourning. Now does this mean that Jehoram was repentant? Absolutely not and the reason I can say that with such certainty is by whom he blames for this mess that he is in, Elisha! He was not angry with what he had done or what the people were doing but with the man of God. Yes, he was upset over the condition that he was in, but not repentant of his actions. And here's the thing. When you turn from God and find yourself in a horrible situation, you can do one of two things. You can repent and get right with God or you can lash out at God. Now you can't touch God so you do the next best thing, you lash out at the servant of God and here it is Elisha, and Jehoram wants the head of Elisha instead of repenting of his own sin!

VERSES 32-33

1. Here once again we see the gift of the word of knowledge in operation in Elisha's life. And he not only sees the messenger coming to the door, but he also sees the king who is right behind him. How do I know that? Because, as it speaks of the messenger of the king coming, it then says, **"Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?"** II Kings 6:32. Thus, not only did the messenger hear these words of Elisha, but so did king Jehoram and thus, what is spoken of in verse 33 of II Kings chapter 6 I believe are the words of the king. You see, I believe Elisha told the king that God would step in and deliver them from this siege, from this famine and the king says, "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer when He is the one who has brought this upon us in the first place?"

2. Now as we move into II Kings chapter 7 it is a continuation of this story that began back in II Kings 6:24. Thus, let's read on and see how the Lord will step in and put a halt to this siege and famine that has come upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel, specifically Samaria. In fact, prior to God stepping in a donkey's head, for stew, went for \$1200 at today's prices and dove droppings were going for \$80 a half a pint. There was cannibalism taking place. But as we will see, prices are going to drop within 24 hours; there will be an abundance of food for the people of Samaria.

## **II KINGS 7**

### **VERSES 1-2**

1. Notice the grace and mercy of God upon Jehoram and the people of Samaria. This came upon them for their wickedness but God was going to bless them with the idea that they would turn to Him, the one who provided food and safety for them. You see, Elisha tells the king that by this time tomorrow, the famine will be over and food will be sold at low prices once again. Elisha tells the king that one bushel of flour would be sold for 75 cents and two bushels of barely for 75 cents. No longer would they be eating unclean animals, nor would they be eating animal waste to survive. They would no longer be eating their children for food, for food would once again be plentiful.

2. Now there was an officer of the king who also heard these words of Elisha and he could not believe what Elisha was saying. Well, I guess it wasn't that he couldn't believe, he would not believe what Elisha was saying, it was a choice on his part. Why did he have such a problem with what Elisha said? Because in his own mind he could not figure out how this could come to pass, and thus, he rejected it. God does not always tell us His ways of doing things or why He is doing something. He only asks us to obey the words of God. How many times, through unbelief, are we kept from partaking in the blessings of God, the work of God? This officer will see it with his own eyes, but he will not partake of it. Of this Spurgeon wrote, "Unbelievers do not really enjoy the things of this life. The mass of them find that wealth does not yield them satisfaction, their outward riches cannot conceal their inner poverty. To many men it is given to have all that heart can wish, and yet not to have what their heart does wish. They have everything except contentment."

It truly is as Paul said in I Timothy 6:6-10, "**Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**" In other words, "**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**" Matthew 6:33.

You see, if you seek God, if He is your Lord and Savior you will find great contentment in that and as you seek Him He will provide for you what you need! This officer did not believe and it was reflected in what he said and what he did and he is the one who will lose out. He will see the blessings of God but he will not be able to partake of them as Elisha has said and as we will see!

#### VERSES 3-4

1. Now the story shifts to these four leprous men who lived just outside the city wall, and would survive on the garbage that was thrown over the wall. Because they were lepers they could not live within the city, they were outcasts, the untouchables! And for the most part, they were able to survive from eating the garbage that was thrown over the wall, but now things had changed. You see, the problem these men now faced was that no one was throwing their garbage over the wall. Why was that? Because they were eating it themselves because of the famine caused by this Syrian siege. Thus, they realized they needed to do something before they starved to death.

2. Now we are not told who these men were, what their names were but Jewish tradition, unfounded, says that they were actually Gehazi and his three sons. If you remember Gehazi, the servant of Elisha was stricken with leprosy because of his greed towards Naaman. (II Kings 5:27). Interesting and it could be possible, but we don't know that for sure, the Scriptures are silent in who these men are.



3. These four men had basically 3 choices in the situation they were in. They could enter the city, but there is no food there, so that would do them no good. They could remain outside the city wall, and again that would do them no good. Or they could surrender to the Syrians, and maybe they would feed them, and the worst that could happen is that the Syrians would kill them, but they were dying anyway from starvation, so that was not such a bad choice.

4. These four leprous men said, **“Why are we sitting here until we die?”** That was a good point as I have said. Now, how does this relate to us today? I like what Spurgeon had to say. He wrote, “Now you perceive that there are just two courses open to you; you can sit still, but then you know that you must perish; or you can go to Christ, and your fear is that you will perish then. Yet you can but die if you go to him, and he rejects you; whereas, if you do not go to him, you must surely perish.” And here’s the thing. If you come to Him He will not reject you. Do you know why? Because there is no sin you can ever imagine that is stronger than His love for you. Thus, come to Him and ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior or you will die, spiritually speaking and be eternally separated from Him in the Lake of Fire!

VERSES 5-7

1. As these men approached the Syrian camp it was like a ghost town. It was completely deserted, but all the supplies were left behind. What terrified them so much that they fled for their lives? I believe it was those same angelic hosts that had encircled the Syrian camp to protect Elisha. They caused such a noise that the Syrians thought that Israel hired the Hittites and the Egyptians to destroy them. And this mighty Syrian army ran for their lives, every man for himself. They left everything behind and as Snagglepuss said, “Heavens to Murgatroyd! Exit stage left!” and that is exactly what they did!

2. Now why were the people of Samaria held behind the city walls? Because of the Syrian army! But the Syrian army was gone and yet they did not even know it, they remained behind those walls, still captive! Again Spurgeon tells us, “Everybody who went to bed that night felt that he was still in that horrible den where grim death seemed actually present in the skeleton forms of the hunger-bitten. They were as free as the harts of the wilderness had they known it: but their ignorance held them in durance [imprisonment] vile.” Look at people today. Jesus has come to set us free and how many remain in captivity because they refuse to open the door of their heart and let Him in, they refuse to ask Him into their lives. The truth will set you free, but, like the people of Samaria, you can remain captive if you refuse to see the truth!

VERSES 8-9

1. So as these four leprous men entered the Syrian camp, they helped themselves to home cooked meals you might say. And the Syrians left all their belongings behind, which they helped themselves to. It was all waiting for them to take and they did take these things.

Now you have to love the integrity of these men. Keep in mind that these men were ostracized by society, they were outcasts, the untouchables, no one wanted to be around them and yet, now that they are blessed they felt compassion for the people back in Samaria that were starving to death. And so they are going to return and tell the king the good news, that there is plenty of food for the taking.

2. We too are living in the day of good news, the age of grace. And we are blessed that we can come and feed on the Word of God, that we, in a sense, can partake of Christ. You see, God is using this as a time of preparation. The problem many times is that we keep taking in and we never share that good news with anyone. Preparation is needed, but then we must put that into practice and share that good news with the lost, who are, in a sense, starving to death spiritually! Spurgeon put it like this, "If the only result of our religion is the comfort of our poor little souls, if the beginning and the end of piety is contained within one's self, why, it is a strange thing to be in connection with the unselfish Jesus, and to be the fruit of his gracious Spirit. Surely, Jesus did not come to save us that we might live unto ourselves. He came to save us from selfishness."

How true that is. If we only keep Jesus for ourselves, then we are being selfish. If we do not share the blessings of God with others, then we are being selfish. And yes, like these lepers who first partook of the meal, we cannot share the Good News of Jesus Christ unless we ourselves first partake of it and are enjoying it! May we have that passion to share the blessings of God that is found in Jesus with others!

### VERSES 10-12

1. So these men arrive back at the city gate and they tell the gatekeeper what they have found and he tells the king's household and the king sees this as a set-up. He thinks that as soon as they leave the city, the Syrian's will rise up and destroy them. He understands that the Syrians know they are starving to death behind these walls and if they were to leave the protection of the walls to go into the Syrian camp to get this food, they will come out of their hiding places and kill and capture them. Now from a human perspective you can understand king Jehoram's reasoning but you also need to understand that Elisha had already told him that this famine was over and here was the evidence, and yet he did not believe! Again we see how sad it is when a person does not believe what God has said. And I think many times we don't believe what God has said because we don't really know Him and because we really don't know Him, then we really can't trust Him. May we, as the Psalmist said, "**The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him.**" Psalm 34:7-9. Taste and see, yes, the Lord He is *GOOD!*

VERSE 13

1. Some of the king's men basically said, "What do we have to lose?" You see, they were going to take several men and five of the remaining horses; the others were eaten, and scope the situation out. Now did they have faith that there was going to be food there? No, but it didn't really matter to them. You see, if they were killed, big deal, they were going to die anyway. What a sad situation, and all because of unbelief!

VERSES 14-15

1. So as the king sends out these men to check out the story from these four leprous men, they can't believe their eyes, they can't believe what they are seeing! The Syrian army was so terrified by what they heard that as they were fleeing they were removing articles of clothing and weapons so they could run faster. It looked like this stuff just exploded off of them and it was strewn all over the roadside!

2. So these men return with this good news and they tell the king of what they saw and what do you think is going to happen next? Well, we don't have to guess, let's read on and see!

VERSES 16-20

1. So now the word has gotten back to Israel on what the Syrian camp looked like, all the food and clothing that was left behind, although I doubt if they were interested in the clothing at this time. They were starving and they wanted food. Thus, the gates of the city were opened and the people ran as fast as they could for the food. Then, after they ate, they plundered the tents of the Syrians. But this was like a stampede as you could imagine. Now the officer who had rejected what Elisha had said earlier was in charge of the gate, but as this rush of people came through the gate, he was trampled and he died! Thus, he saw it but he could not partake of the blessings. That is the price of unbelief. He was, in a sense, standing on the outside looking in! The prophecy of Elisha came to pass down to the smallest detail because that is how accurate God is!

2. The tragedy to each generation is that they have seen the blessings of God, they have seen God working in people's lives, they have seen the hand of God in creation and yet they do not believe. It isn't that they can't believe, it is that they won't believe and thus, they will be judged accordingly for their unbelief. In Revelation chapter 19 we read,

**“ . . . He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God.”**

Again it is because of unbelief that they will be trampled, because they have rejected Christ. They have seen the blessings of God in other people's lives but have not partaken of those blessings themselves and they will die in their sins!

## II KINGS 8

### VERSES 1-3

1. If you remember back in II Kings chapter 4, this Shunammite woman opened her home up to Elisha as he passed by from time-to-time. She had a room for him to stay at and Elisha wanted to do something for her to repay the kindness that was extended to him. But she told Elisha that she was in need of nothing. But Elisha's servant, Gehazi said to him, "**... She has no son, and her husband is old.**" So Elisha told her that at the appointed time next year she would have a son, and she did.

Well, time passed by and this child grew, he may have been around 5 years old or so at this point and one day he was out working with his dad when he got this terrible headache, and his dad sends him home to his mom. As she cradles him in her arms he dies. She then wastes no time and places her dead son in the bed of Elisha and heads out looking for this prophet of God. She was not preparing her son for burial, but for resurrection and thus, she goes out to find Elisha and Elisha returns and the boy's life is restored.

2. Now there is going to be a famine in the land and this famine was going to last seven years, it was going to be bad. Thus, we see here that Elisha tells this woman to gather her family and go to another land for seven years because of this famine, she was to go to the land of the Philistines.

And now seven years have passed, the famine is over and she returns home and the land that she forfeited by her departure has someone else living there on her property. Thus, she now wants it back, and is going to present her case before the king.

#### VERSES 4-6

1. Remember that Gehazi was the servant of Elisha, but because he lied and took the gifts from Naaman, he became leprous. Now, instead of serving God, all he can do is speak about what God has done. No longer was he involved in the work of God. Paul hit on this issue of making sure his walk with God was right so that he would not be placed on the shelf, he would not be disqualified for service. He said in I Corinthians 9:27, “**But I discipline by body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**” May we, like Paul, deal with that flesh nature on a daily basis so we might not be disqualified!

Now if Gehazi was leprous, how could he speak to the king? Some say that this took place before he became a leper, but I don’t think that is what is going on here. It is very possible that the king kept his distance and since he was interested in the things that Elisha has done, he wants Gehazi to share with him these stories. It is as Adam Clarke wrote, “Some think that this conversation might have taken place after Gehazi became leprous; the king having an insatiable curiosity to know the private history or a man who had done such astonishing things: and from whom could he get this information, except from the prophet’s own confidential servant?” I do lean in that direction, that Gehazi was leprous when he spoke to the king.



2. Now as Gehazi is telling the king of this story, this woman appears before them. Now folk's, that was not just a lucky turn of events, this is the providence of God or the divine intervention of God in this situation. God was in control as He always is! And as the king hears her case he makes a judgment and the king's judgment was to give her the land back and pay back to her those 7 years. God works out all the details to get this woman to come before them while they are speaking of her. Again, that is the providence of God. That is, He takes the natural and uses it in a supernatural way to accomplish His will. I think many times we miss what God is doing because we are not looking but God works supernaturally in very natural ways! May we be looking!

#### VERSES 7-9

1. Remember that Ben-Hadad II earlier wanted Elisha dead but that kept failing and so, instead of fighting against him, Ben-Hadad II embraces him you might say. And we don't know what he is sick with, but it troubled him and Ben-Hadad II sends his servant, Hazael to go and inquire of Elisha and see if he would recovery from this illness.
2. Now Hazael comes to Elisha with a good sum of gifts and maybe Ben-Hadad II sent all these gifts to Elisha so that he may get a favorable message from him. But if you remember back in II Kings chapter 5, Elisha did not receive the gifts that Naaman wanted to give to him and thus, I don't believe he received these gifts either.

VERSES 10-13

1. Now when you listen to what Elisha is saying, these words from God, it sounds like God is speaking from both sides of His mouth and is in fact contradicting Himself. Yes he will recover and no, he will die, which is it? Now first of all we know from the Scriptures that God does not speak from both sides of His mouth nor does He contradict Himself. Thus, we are not seeing all we need to see or we are misunderstanding what He is saying. And as we have read, what God has said is 100% correct.

You see, Ben-Hadad II is going to recovery from this illness but something or someone else is going to kill him! And before Elisha tells Hazael who it is, as Elisha completed speaking to Hazael, he began to stare intently at him and he made Hazael very uncomfortable. Remember, Elisha had the gift of the word of knowledge working in his life and thus, we know why he was staring so intently at Hazel and why he began to weep as he did!

2. Now I don't know about you, but it is uncomfortable being around someone who is crying and weeping as Elisha was and Hazael questions Elisha about his behavior, what is going on? And Elisha tells him that when he becomes king that he was going to perpetrate all kinds of evil against Israel. He was not only going to become king of Syria, Ben-Hadad II will pass off the scene you might say, but he will be brutal against the Northern Kingdom of Israel! That is why Elisha was staring so intently at Hazel and weeping.

3. What I find interesting is that Hazael didn't even recognize the evil that was in his own heart. He could not believe what Elisha was saying and dismissed it and rebukes Elisha for those statements. You see, it is God who searches our hearts and knows the wickedness that is in them. We are told in Jeremiah 17:9-10, "**The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.**" And it also tells me that all of us have within our hearts the ability to do wickedly.

It is as Spurgeon said regarding our hearts. He wrote, "Our ignorance of the depravity of our own hearts is a startling fact, Hazael did not believe that he was bad enough to do any of the things here anticipated. . . . I appeal to you, Christian men and women, if anyone had told you that you would have loved your Savior so little as you have done; if any prophet had told you, in the hour of your conversion, that you would have served him so feebly as you have done, would you have believed it!"

And think about the heart of Hazel. He is not told that he is going to kill the king, as we will see, that is going to come out of his own heart, which is wicked, more wicked than he could ever imagine! Again Spurgeon tells us, "It was absolutely foretold that Hazael would be king of Syria. The prophet knew the fact right well, and he clearly descried the means; else, why should he look into Hazael's face, and weep? God foreknew the mischief that he would do when he came to the throne; yet that foreknowledge did not in the least degree interfere with his free agency."

4. In I Kings 19:15 God told Elijah to anoint Hazael king over Syria. It doesn't seem like that took place and now that Elisha has taken over the ministry, and we are now 10 years or so down the road, he anoints Hazael king over Syria. But keep in mind that Ben-Hadad II is still the king; he is not quite dead yet as Monty Python once said.

#### VERSES 14-15

1. You see, Ben-Hadad II was to recover from this illness or injury, just as God said. If Hazael had not suffocated the king he would have lived. Thus, he was to die, but not from his illness or injury. You see, God was 100% correct in what He said would take place, like there was any doubt!

2. Now is it fair to blame Hazael for his actions when God said it was going to happen? Folk's, we all have a free will and we are responsible for our actions. Spurgeon put it like this, "The predestination of God does not destroy the free agency of man, or lighten the responsibility of the sinner. It is true, in the matter of salvation, when God comes to save, his free grace prevails over our free agency, and leads the will in glorious captivity to the obedience of faith. But in sinning, man is free, — free in the widest sense of the term, never being compelled to do any evil deed, but being left to follow the turbulent passions of his own corrupt heart, and carry out the prevailing tendencies of his own depraved nature." We have choices to make and there are consequences to those choices!

3. What is interesting is that we have historical evidence of what took place here. Russell Dilday tells us, “An ancient Assyrian inscription, called the Berlin inscription, says, ‘Hazeal the son of nobody, seized the throne.’ This designation indicates that he was an usurper with no dynastic line.” Not that we need it, but the historical evidence supports what the Scriptures tell us!

4. We are going to stop here tonight and will pick up in II Kings chapter 8 starting in verse 16 next time, as we look at the kings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.