

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 2 KINGS 7

2 KINGS 6:24-7:20 - ARAM'S SIEGE OF SAMARIA - OVER THE RECENT CHAPTERS WE HAVE SEEN TENSIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ARAM (SYRIA). ARAM IS RULED BY BEN-HADDAD. THE SMALL SKIRMISHES WE HAVE READ ABOUT THUS FAR ARE NOTHING COMPARED TO THE CONFRONTATION WE WILL READ ABOUT IN THIS NEXT SECTION. ARAM ATTACKS AND THINGS WILL TURN DEVASTATINGLY BLEAK FOR ISRAEL.

2 KINGS 6:24-25 - THE SIEGE BEGINS

A SIEGE IS MORE THAN JUST ONE ARMY ATTACKING ANOTHER, A SIEGE IN THIS CONTEXT INCLUDED THE ARAMEAN (SYRIAN) ARMY SURROUNDING THE CITY OF SAMARIA AND HOLDING HER PEOPLE CAPTIVE IN THE CITY.

SIEGE: A MILITARY OPERATION IN WHICH ENEMY FORCES SURROUND A TOWN OR BUILDING, CUTTING OFF ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES, WITH THE AIM OF COMPELLING THE SURRENDER OF THOSE INSIDE. (SOURCE: GOOGLE DICTIONARY)

HOW BAD WAS IT IN SAMARIA? THE ESV STUDY BIBLE HELPS US UNDERSTAND THE IMAGES HERE:

"DONKEY'S HEAD ... DOVE'S DUNG. DONKEYS WERE COMMONLY FOUND AMONG THE DOMESTIC ANIMALS IN SYRIA-PALESTINE, AND VARIOUS OT LAWS IDENTIFY THEM AS SIGNIFICANT POSSESSIONS (E.G., EX. 13:13; 20:17; 22:4). SO SEVERE WAS THE SIEGE THAT THE INHABITANTS OF SAMARIA WERE REDUCED NOT ONLY TO SLAUGHTERING AND EATING VALUABLE ANIMALS, BUT ALSO TO CONSUMING BODY PARTS THAT WOULD NOT NORMALLY BE CONSUMED, AND PURCHASING THEM FOR EXORBITANT PRICES (THE COST OF A LIVE HORSE IN 1 KINGS 10:29 IS ONLY 150 SHEKELS OF SILVER, AND HERE A DONKEY'S HEAD COSTS EIGHTY). DURING THIS CRISIS EVEN HALF A LITER (THE FOURTH PART OF A KAB) OF DOVE'S DUNG COST WHAT THE AVERAGE WORKER COULD MAKE IN SIX MONTHS (FIVE SHEKELS OF SILVER)." (ESV STUDY BIBLE NOTE, 2 KINGS 6:25)

SOUNDS PRETTY BLEAK DOESN'T IT? AS WE READ ON, WE WILL SEE IT GETS EVEN WORSE.

2 KINGS 6:26-31 - TRAGIC TIMES IN ISRAEL

THERE ARE FEW MOMENTS MORE HEARTBREAKING IN SCRIPTURE THAN THIS ONE RIGHT HERE. THE SITUATION IS SO BAD, AND THE PEOPLE ARE SO FORGONE THAT THEY HAVE RESORTED TO CANNIBALISM TO SURVIVE. A WOMAN'S GRIEF IS SO BAD SHE CRIES TO THE KING FOR HELP. APPARENTLY SHE HAD AN AGREEMENT WITH HER NEIGHBOR THAT THEY WOULD CONSUME EACH OTHER'S CHILDREN. AFTER HER CHILD IS EATEN, THE NEIGHBORING WOMAN HIDES HER SON TO PRESERVE HIM. HOW SICK.

IN HER DESPERATION, SHE CRIES OUT TO THE KING FOR HIS INTERVENTION IN THE SITUATION. THE KING IS INITIALLY DISMISSIVE BUT THEN BROKEN UP WHEN HE HEARS THIS NEWS. HE TEARS HIS CLOTHES, AN ANCIENT SYMBOL OF GRIEF AND MOURNING. RATHER THAN THE KING BEING A SYMBOL OF STRENGTH AND UNIFYING FIGURE FOR THE NATION, HE IS HELPLESS HIMSELF.

AND FROM A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE, THERE IS NO INDICATION ANYONE IS CALLING UPON THE LORD. THE KING MOCKINGLY DECLARES "IF THE LORD DOESN'T HELP YOU, WHAT CAN I DO"? (V. 27). AND NOW, RATHER THAN SEEKING ELISHA FOR HELP FROM THE LORD, HE CONCLUDES THAT REMOVING ELISHA FROM THE LAND WILL END THE SIEGE. THINGS ARE TRAGICALLY BAD ON EVERY LEVEL.

2 KINGS 6:32-33 - THE KING SENDS FOR ELISHA

ELISHA IS NOT SURPRISED BY THE KING'S MESSENGER COMING. HE IS GATHERED WITH THE ELDERS OF THE NATION AND PREDICTS THE VISIT. THE MESSENGER DECLARES THE HEART OF THE KING:

2 KINGS 6:33B (ESV) - "THIS TROUBLE IS FROM THE LORD! WHY SHOULD I WAIT FOR THE LORD ANY LONGER?"

IT'S NOT LIKE THE KING WAS REALLY "WAITING ON THE LORD" BUT WE HAVE THIS CURIOUS STATEMENT FROM HIS MESSENGER. IT'S AS IF THE KING SUBCONSCIOUSLY KNOWS THE LORD IS THE TRUE GOD - WHY ELSE WOULD HE BE COMING TO ELISHA? YET HE REFUSES TO SEEK HIM — AND EVEN BLAMES GOD FOR THE TROUBLE!

2 KINGS 7:1-2 - ELISHA'S WORD. OFFICER'S MOCKING

ELISHA PROPHESES THAT THE TROUBLE WILL BE OVER SOON AND THINGS WILL RETURN TO "BUSINESS AS USUAL" AS THEY WERE BEFORE THE SIEGE. THE ECONOMIC REFERENCES HERE INDICATE THAT. COMPARE THE GOODS AND PRICES OF 7:1 WITH 6:25 (ONE SHEKEL FOR FINE FLOUR AND BARLEY V. EIGHTY SHEKELS OF SILVER FOR A DONKEY'S HEAD AND SOME DOVE'S DUNG..

HOWEVER, THE KING'S OFFICIAL MOCKS THE POSSIBILITY OF THIS HAPPENING (V. 2), AND THUS THE POWER OF THE LORD. AS A RESULT, ELISHA DECLARES THAT ALL OF THIS RESTORATION WILL HAPPEN, BUT NOT TOWARDS HIM. WITHHOLDING BLESSING IS A WAY THE LORD BRINGS HIS JUDGMENT UPON THE WICKED.

2 KINGS 7:3-11 - THE AMAZING DISCOVERY OF THE 4 LEPERS

THE 4 LEPERS WOULD HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE COMMUNITY AND THE CITY ITSELF FOR HYGIENIC REASONS. LEPROSY WAS HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS. THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN AN INTERESTING SITUATION. IF THEY RETURN TO THE CITY, THEY WILL DIE BECAUSE OF THE SIEGE PROVOKED FAMINE. IF THEY LEAVE THEIR SPOT OUTSIDE THE GATE, THEY WILL BE ENTERING ARAMEAN MILITARY TERRITORY.

YET IN A BRILLIANT REALIZATION OF THE MOMENT THEY WERE IN, THEY RECOGNIZE THEY ARE LIKELY GOING TO DIE REGARDLESS OF WHAT COURSE THEY TAKE - WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A SLIM BUT EXISTING CHANCE THEY WILL BE SPARED BY THE ARAMEAN ARMY. AND SO RATHER SITTING IN PESSIMISM, THEY GET UP AND CHOOSE TO LIVE OUT THEIR POTENTIAL FINAL DAYS RATHER THAN REMAIN SEDENTARY AND DIE.

V. 5-8 - WHEN THE 4 LEPERS ENTER TO ARAMEAN CAMP, THEY FIND THE PLACE DESERTED. THERE ARE NO SOLDIERS, BUT ALL OF THEIR GOODS, SUPPLIES, AND RESOURCES REMAIN! THE LEPERS FIND A GREAT BOUNTY AND BEGIN TO ENJOY THE SPOILS! WE LEARN FROM THE TEXT THAT THIS WAS GOD'S DOING:

2 KINGS 7:6 - (NLT) - FOR THE LORD HAD CAUSED THE ARAMEAN ARMY TO HEAR THE CLATTER OF SPEEDING CHARIOTS AND THE GALLOPING OF HORSES AND THE SOUNDS OF A GREAT ARMY APPROACHING. "THE KING OF ISRAEL HAS HIRED THE HITTITES AND EGYPTIANS TO ATTACK US!" THEY CRIED TO ONE ANOTHER.

V. 9-11 - THESE 4 UNNAMED LEPERS SHOW TREMENDOUS HUMILITY IN A MOMENT WHEN IT WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY TEMPTING TO BE SELFISH. THEY BEGIN TO ENJOY THE SPOIL AND THEN RECOGNIZE THIS GREAT MIRACLE WAS NOT FOR THEM, BUT ALL OF THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA. AND THEY REALIZE THIS AMAZING SIGHT AND MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE IS GOOD NEWS THAT NEEDS TO BE SHARED WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY, LONG IN DESPAIR BECAUSE OF THE SIEGE.

2 KINGS 7:12 - ISRAEL'S KING IS NOT CONVINCED

THE KING DOESN'T BELIEVE THAT THE LEPER'S DISCOVERY IS LEGIT. RATHER THAN HUMBLY REALIZING THAT WHAT ELISHA SAID WOULD HAPPEN, HE FIGURES THE NEWS OF HIS ENEMY'S RETREAT IS ANYTHING BUT GOD'S WORD BEING FULFILLED.

THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE THAT ARE LIKE THIS. THEY ARE SO BENT ON UNBELIEF THAT A MIRACLE COULD BE DONE IN FRONT OF THEIR EYES AND THEY STILL WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE WORD OF THE LORD. THIS IS A CLEAR SIGN OF HARDNESS OF HEART. (THINK PHARAOH AND MOSES OR SAUL AND DAVID OR THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND JESUS CHRIST). THEIR HARDNESS AND PRIDE LEAVES THEM SKEPTICAL AND RESISTANT EVEN WHEN THE WORK OF GOD BEFORE THEM IS OBVIOUS.

THIS IS NOT A MODEL TO FOLLOW. THOSE WE MAY KNOW WHO REMIND US OF THE KING OF ISRAEL NEED OUR PRAYERS.

2 KINGS 7:13-16 - A SEARCH PARTY TO CONFIRM IF IT'S TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

UPON THE SUGGESTION OF ONE OF HIS SERVANTS, THE KING AGREES TO SEND SOME SCOUTS OUT TO SEE IF THE LEPERS' STORY IS TRUE. IT'S NOT MUCH OF A RISK BECAUSE THE SERVANT REALIZES IF IT IS NOT TRUE, THEY ESSENTIALLY WERE ALL GOING TO DIE ANYWAY.

AS THE SCOUTS REACH THE CAMP, NOT ONLY IS THE LEPERS' STORY CONFIRMED, THEY ALSO FIND THAT AS FAR AS THE JORDAN RIVER THE ARMY LEFT QUITE THE BOUNTY BEHIND.

V. 16 - THE FINAL RESULT OF ALL OF THIS IS THAT THE WORD OF THE LORD BY ELISHA CAME TO PASS. TO THE SHEKEL.

2 KINGS 7:17-20 - GOD'S WORD IS TRUE.

THE SKEPTICAL ROYAL OFFICIAL FROM VERSE 2 IS KILLED BY THE CITY'S RESIDENCE TRAMPLING HIM. THE OFFICER "SAW" THE MIRACLE BUT DID NOT "EAT OF IT" (CP. V. 2, V. 16, V. 18-19). WOW.

HOW INTERESTING THAT GOD DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN THOSE WHO MOCKED OR REJECTED HIS WORD AND THOSE WHO DID NOT. LET'S NOT BE CONFUSED HERE - THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL IS STILL SOAKED IN IDOLATRY. THIS DELIVERANCE IS NOT DUE TO THE NATION HUMBLING ITSELF AND RETURNING TO WORSHIP YAHWEH. THIS DELIVERANCE IS A RESULT OF GRACE AND GRACE AND GRACE. AND YET IN THIS DAY OF GRACE, THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARE "SLEEPING" WHO THROUGH THE ACT OF GRACE ARE AWAKENED TO THE LOVE AND GOODNESS OF GOD AND THEN THERE ARE THOSE WHO PUSH BACK AGAINST IT. THE ROYAL OFFICIAL IS THE LATER.

TO CONCLUDE I'D LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT THE 4 LEPERS WHO WE MEET IN THIS STORY. THEY ARE REMARKABLE MEN FOR AT LEAST TWO TEACHABLE REASONS.

1 - "WHY DO WE SIT HERE UNTIL WE DIE?"

WHAT A GREAT WORD FOR US. THERE ARE MOMENTS IN OUR LIVES THAT INVOLVE CIRCUMSTANCES WE CANNOT CONTROL. SOMETIMES OUR OUTLOOK LOOKS BLEAK OR CLOUDY. WE WISH WE COULD CHANGE THE WAY THINGS ARE, BUT WE CANNOT - MOSTLY BECAUSE WE CAN'T CHANGE OTHER PEOPLE, NOR DO WE CONTROL THE UNIVERSE. AND SO THERE WE SIT - WITH A CHOICE IN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS ABOUT WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO, HOW WE ARE GOING TO PROCEED. ARE WE GOING TO GIVE IN AND BECOME AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE EVIL, CHAOS OR SIN? OR ARE WE GOING TO SIT WHERE WE ARE IN DESPAIR ABOUT OUR SITUATION, HOPELESS, DEPRESSED AND RESIGNED?

THESE MEN SHOW US ANOTHER OPTION - WHY ARE WE GOING TO JUST SIT HERE AND DIE? SURE, OUR CIRCUMSTANCES ARE BAD, BUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR THOUGHTS AND HEART NEED NOT BE. WE CAN STILL PRAISE GOD, WE CAN STILL SERVE GOD, WE CAN STILL PRAY, WE CAN STILL WORSHIP HIM. WE CANNOT LET THE WORLD AROUND US SUCK THE LIFE OF GOD OUT OF US. THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD, THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING KINGDOM AND THE REALITY OF HIS PRESENCE WITH US RIGHT NOW, IN THE MIDST OF OUR CRUMMY-NESS IS BIGGER THAN THE CIRCUMSTANCES WE ARE TROUBLED BY.

2 - "WE ARE NOT DOING RIGHT. THIS DAY IS A DAY OF GOOD NEWS, BUT WE ARE KEEPING SILENT."

THE SECOND AWESOME EXAMPLE IS THROUGH THEIR CONFESSION AND REALIZATION OF THE MOMENT THEY WERE IN. THESE MEN RECEIVE THE BLESSING OF GOD'S VICTORY AND BEGIN TO ENJOY THE SPOILS OF GOD'S WORK. THEY ARE FEASTING OFF THE BOUNTY AND COLLECTING THE RICHES...AND THEN IT HITS THEM. "WAIT A MINUTE! THIS IS A DAY OF GOOD NEWS! WE ARE ENJOYING THESE GOODS, BUT THERE REMAIN A HOST STILL UNDER SIEGE IN THE CITY!"

THE LEPERS REALIZE THAT THE CAPTIVE RESIDENTS OF SAMARIA DON'T EVEN KNOW THAT THE ENEMY THAT ONCE HAD POWER OVER THEM HAS BEEN DEFEATED. YET THEY REMAIN IN CAPTIVITY BECAUSE NO ONE HAS TOLD THEM THE GOOD NEWS! HOW SELFISH FOR THE LEPERS TO COLLECT THE BENEFITS OF GOD'S VICTORY WHILE OTHERS ARE STARVING AND DYING - ESPECIALLY WHEN THERE IS NOW PLENTY OF FOOD TO GO AROUND!

NOTICE THE FULL COMPREHENSION OF THE LEPERS:

2 KINGS 7:9 - THEN THEY SAID TO ONE ANOTHER, "WE ARE NOT DOING RIGHT. THIS DAY IS A DAY OF GOOD NEWS, BUT WE ARE KEEPING SILENT; IF WE WAIT UNTIL MORNING LIGHT, PUNISHMENT WILL OVERTAKE US. NOW THEREFORE COME, LET US GO AND TELL THE KING'S HOUSEHOLD."

THEY ACTUALLY CONCLUDE THAT IF THEY KEEP THE GOOD NEWS TO THEMSELVES, PUNISHMENT AWAITS THEM (!) BECAUSE THIS GOOD NEWS WAS FOR ALL THOSE WHO WERE IN NEED OF DELIVERANCE. GOD WANTED THEM TO ENJOY THE BLESSING, WHICH THEY DID FIRST HAND AND BEFORE ANYONE ELSE - BUT IT WAS ONLY RIGHT FOR THOSE WHO HAD HEARD, SEEN AND EXPERIENCED THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S POWER AND SALVATION TO SHARE IT WITH ALL THOSE WHO STILL REMAINED CAPTIVE AND ARE STARVING AND WILL DIE.

INDEED CHURCH...IT IS ONLY RIGHT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE HEARD AND SEEN AND EXPERIENCED THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S POWER AND SALVATION TO SHARE IT WITH ALL THOSE WHO STILL REMAIN CAPTIVE AND ARE STARVING AND WILL DIE.