

2 Kings 6:24-8:15

II. Jehoram/Joram (Israel) 3:1-8:15

B. Elisha 4:1-8:15

Israel's perennial enemy has been Syria, which shares Israel's north-eastern border.

MAP

Throughout their history, they've alternated between an uneasy truce & outright war.

In vs. 8-23 we read of miraculous event that led to a time of relative peace between the 2 kingdoms.

The Syrians sent an army to capture & kill the prophet Elisha whom God was giving all Syria's military secrets too.

But at Elisha's word, they were blinded – then he led them into the heart of Samaria, the capital of Israel where they were forced to surrender.

Instead of wiping them out – Elisha commanded that they be treated well, given a good meal, then sent home.

This amazing demonstration of the superior power of Israel's God combined with such unexpected grace on the part of His people, moved the Syrians to break off their hostilities.

But as we come to v. 24 – the political situation has changed & Syria is once more at odds with Israel.

New leadership has taken control in the Syrian capital of Damascus & they are for renewing the old hostilities.

9. Syrians besiege Samaria 6:24-7:20

a. the siege & famine 6:24-33

24And it happened after this that Ben-Hadad king of Syria gathered all his army, and went up and besieged Samaria.

This is Ben Hadad II. BTW – as in so many other cases with the names of foreign rulers – Ben Hadad isn't an actual given name – it's a title.

Ben = son of / **Hadad** was the chief Syrian deity; the name means "Thunderer."

Hadad was the Syrian name for **Baal**.

Much is left unsaid here.

That the Syrians could lay siege to the very capital of Israel means Israel has become incredibly weak.

To go from the miraculous deliverance of vs. 8-23 to this siege means Israel has not repented of her sin & has fallen under the judgment of God.

Earlier we read of Israel's troubles with the rebellious kingdom of Moab to the east.

They were barely able to put that rebellion down & ended up having to break off the engagement before it was completed.

Then we read several stories of the power of Elisha & how a small group of the faithful gather around him.

Under his anointed leadership, Israel is given a brief window of peace &

blessing.

Even though the majority of the nation has turned its back on God, He shows them what it could be like if they would return to Him.

But when they refuse to, the trouble returns; this time in the form of a siege.

The nation has fallen far indeed that it could go from where the Syrian army is captive *inside* Samaria's walls, to laying siege to the city *outside*.

25 And there was a great famine in Samaria; and indeed they besieged it until a donkey's head was sold for 80 shekels of silver, and ¼ of a kab of dove droppings for 5 shekels of silver.

Siege was a standard form of ancient warfare.

You surrounded a city & sealed it off from resupply so that eventually the defenders would surrender to thirst or starvation.

Knowing siege was a potential, cities stored up supplies of food & water.

Of course, the besieging army had to be provided for as well & sometimes it turned out the city had more stores than the besiegers had supplies.

So siege was a waiting game to see who'd give in first.

During a prolonged siege such as this, the city supplies would run low and people would begin to scrounge around for anything to eat.

They'd hold out just as long as they could because the lifting of the siege was something that could happen at literally any hour.

In Samaria at this time, things that would have been considered refuse at any other time became prime fare only the rich could afford.

The donkey had already been eaten – and all that was left now was the skull, which sold for a fortune.

4 ounces of bird-poo cost over a month's wages for a common laborer.

26 Then, as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, "Help, my lord, O king!" 27 And he said, "If the LORD does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or from the winepress?" 28 Then the king said to her, "What is troubling you?" And she answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' 29 So we boiled my son, and ate him. And I said to her on the next day, 'Give your son, that we may eat him'; but she has hidden her son." 30 Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he tore his clothes; and as he passed by on the wall, the people looked, and there underneath he had sackcloth on his body.

The siege lasted so long, they'd turned to cannibalism.

In Lev. 26:29 & Deut. 28:53, 57 we read the warnings God gave Israel if they should turn from Him to worship idols.

Among many other curses that would befall them was that their enemies would surround & lay siege to them and they would fall to the depths of depravity of cannibalism.

Though God had reversed their prior troubles in a season of gracious blessing under Elisha's leadership, the nation at large & its leaders had failed to follow

through on the lesson by returning to the Lord themselves.

So Syria marched up & laid siege to the city as the manifestation of God's discipline.

Each day that passed without repentance took them deeper into that discipline until they were tasting the result of their rebellion – donkey brains, bird poop & boiled baby.

Understand something – When in Leviticus & Deuteronomy, God foretold the curses that would come on Israel if they should turn away from Him –

These things weren't manifestations of His anger as though He was *punishing* them so much as they were **WARNINGS** of what their evil choices would bring *upon their own heads*.

Donkey brains, bird poop & cannibalism were what the Samaritans *chose for themselves* by rejecting God & worshipping idols.

This is what you end up with when you tell God to go take a flying leap & leave you alone.

When Jehoram saw this horrifying example of how bad things had gotten, he tore his royal garment, revealing that underneath he wore the sackcloth that demonstrated repentance.

Here was a man who'd removed the Phoenician idols of his father & mother but had retained the golden calf of Jeroboam.

Now that he's in over his head & facing a desperate end, he dons the smock of humility & cries out in desperate repentance – but it's not focused in the right direction.

It's repentance for repentance sake.

It's felling sorry for sin, but without admission of *WHO'S* been offended.

I'm concerned that *this* is what *our* national, state & local leaders will do when calamity strikes our nation.

They've forsaken the God of the Bible and turned to the golden calf of secular humanism.

When calamity comes, my concern is that they will work up a genuine contrition & lament the terrible things we've done as a people.

But they'll lament our misuse of the environment & our abuse of other nations.

They'll repent of intolerance of other religions & lifestyles.

They'll admit being wrong about so much but will never acknowledge their real error – that they've turned their backs on God.

No – in their misplaced repentance, they will even lament that they at one time believed in Him – blaming *that* for the problems they now suffer.

Such was Jehoram's repentance – a politically correct expression of religious remorse that did **NOTHING** to bring relief.

The proof of all this is what we find next -

31 Then he said, "God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today!"

Just as Elijah had announced a drought in the days of Ahab, Elisha had warned this siege was God's discipline for Israel's idolatry.

But instead of putting away their idols, *which is what true repentance would have done*, Jehoram put on some burlap & *blamed Elisha* for their distress.

And as his father Ahab had thought about Elijah, Jehoram thought *executing* Elisha would end their troubles.

32But Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. And *the king* sent a man ahead of him, but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, “Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent someone to take away my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door. *Is not the sound of his master’s feet behind him?*”

In a fit of anger, Jehoram sent a squad to cut off the prophet’s head.

No sooner had they left on their errand than the king regretted the order & went after them himself.

But Elisha wasn’t one to be taken by surprise; God told him what was happening & he briefed the men with him to keep the door shut till Jehoram arrived.

33And while he was still talking with them, there was the messenger, coming down to him; and then *the king* said, “Surely this calamity is from the LORD; why should I wait for the LORD any longer?”

When Jehoram arrived Elisha let him in.

The king then laid the blame for the city’s troubles at God’s door.

His remarks stood in complete contradiction to his actions!

He’s not shown a moments concern or attention for Yahweh.

If he had, he’d have gotten rid of the golden calf long ago.

He’s put on the sackcloth of repentance, but he’s not done what God said to do.

This is like the modern politician who goes to a cathedral every Sunday & listens to a liberal priest give a religious talk that’s politically correct but void of truth

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And thinks he’s paid his dues to God, then on the floor of Congress . . .

- Votes for federal funding for abortions,
- Opposes any restrictions on abortion up through delivery,
- & passes legislation sanctioning same sex marriage.

It’s not enough to talk the talk – one must also walk the walk.

Jehoram didn’t – but oh how quick he was to blame God for Samaria’s woes!

If he wanted to know the true cause of the city’s distress, all he needed to do was look in a mirror.

b. Elijah’s prophecy 7:1-2

1Then Elisha said, “Hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the LORD: ‘Tomorrow about this time a seah [2 gallons] of fine flour *shall be sold* for a shekel, & 2 seahs [4 gallons] of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.’ ”

Though the siege had *not led* to true repentance, God would bring them a miraculous deliverance.

Hopefully that demonstration *of His mercy* would effect repentance.

I never cease to be *amazed* by God’s grace. *Amazing grace indeed!*

2So an officer on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, “Look, *if* the LORD would make windows in heaven, could this thing be?” And he said, “In fact, you shall see *it* with your

eyes, but you shall not eat of it.”

Not conveyed in our translation is the utter disdain & scorn of this man’s comment to Elisha.

This is a sarcastic mocking of what Elisha has just prophesied by the Word of the Lord.

Because of his unbelief, while he will *see* the prophecy fulfilled, he will not get to enjoy it.

c. Syrians leave 7:3-20

³Now there were 4 leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, “Why are we sitting here until we die? ⁴If we say, ‘We will enter the city,’ the famine *is* in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die.”

Lepers were not allowed to live inside the city. They lived on the outskirts, *outside* the city walls.

They lived off the scraps people would throw them.

But those scraps have now become precious & afforded only by the wealthy – so if things were desperate inside Samaria, imagine how bad they were for these 4.

It gets so bad, death is imminent & they reason, “Look, we’re going to die one way or the other if we just sit here. Let’s see if maybe the Syrians would give us something to eat.”

⁵And they rose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians; and when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise no one was there. ⁶For the LORD had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses—the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!”

This was exactly the historical situation of that time.

The Hittites bordered Syria to the northwest & were causing them a lot of trouble.

We also know the Egyptians had a long standing policy of assisting *whatever power was secondary* in the Middle East in order to keep a check on the main power.

The Syrians thought that Israel had paid off the Egyptians & Hittites to come to their aide and lift this siege.

⁷Therefore they arose and fled at twilight, and left the camp intact—their tents, their horses, and their donkeys—and they fled for their lives. ⁸And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried from it silver and gold and clothing, and went and hid *them*; then they came back and entered another tent, and carried *some* from there *also*, and went and hid *it*. ⁹Then they said to one another, “We are not doing right. This

day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household."

After eating & drinking their fill and stowing away some of the booty, they realize there's way more there than they can keep - & behind them is an entire city of thousands on the verge of starvation.

Their conscience tells them what they're doing is wrong.

How much enjoyment will their treasure bring them if everyone in Samaria is dead?

These 4 lepers are a picture of believers.

The Spirit of God convicts us of our need of Christ & we respond, then discover as we grow in grace that the life of faith is what we were created for.

We enjoy the goodness of God → then it hits us:

A whole lot of people are still languishing & dying in the world.

We really *ought* to tell others of the goodness we've found.

And how much more *enjoyable* is the treasure of grace when it's shared with others?

¹⁰So they went and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, saying, "We went to the Syrian camp, and surprisingly no one was there, not a human sound—only horses and donkeys tied, and the tents intact."

Hearing this, the starving people of Samaria are going to come running, right?

¹¹And the gatekeepers called out, and they told *it* to the king's household inside. ¹²So the king arose in the night and said to his servants, "Let me now tell you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we are hungry; therefore they have gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, 'When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.'"

"Ah - It's too good to be true!"

Wait – hadn't the prophet *foretold* salvation would come by the next day? Yep.

Aren't these lepers saying what the prophet had foretold had come? Yep.

But the response of the lost in the city is disbelief → Just like when we share the Good News of Christ.

The Prophets *foretold* it & we *testify* to it.

Yet still the lost say, "It's too good to be true. It's a trick."

On my web browser, I have a plug in that randomly takes me to site that are getting a lot of traffic, according to categories of interest I've selected.

One of the categories I've picked is Christianity – and it includes sites *critical* of the Faith.

Every site I've seen that opposes Christianity without exception drips with scorn & mockery.

Not one – NOT A SINGLE SITE! is an honest, gentle or kind statement of the atheist or agnostic position.

They're mean, insulting, & totally irrelevant.

I have yet, after seeing dozens of these sites, to find *one* that brings up an

issue that hasn't already been answered & dispensed with by basic apologetics.

They are nothing but electronic Jehoram's who blame God & faith in Him for all the problems of the modern world & mock the Gospel.

And just like Jehoram of old – their mockery doesn't alter the facts one bit – God is real & the Gospel is true.

13And one of his servants answered and said, "Please, let several men take 5 of the remaining horses which are left in the city. Look, they may either become like all the multitude of Israel that are left in it; or indeed, I say, they may become like all the multitude of Israel left from those who are consumed; so let us send them and see."

14Therefore they took 2 chariots with horses; and the king sent them in the direction of the Syrian army, saying, "Go and see." **15**And they went after them to the Jordan; and indeed all the road was full of garments and weapons which the Syrians had thrown away in their haste. So the messengers returned and told the king.

Their reasoning runs a bit like the lepers: "What do we have to lose by sending our a search party?"

So they send out a couple chariots which follow the trail of cast off gear all the way to the Jordan River.

There isn't a Syrian to be seen anywhere.

Question – How many died of thirst & starvation while this search was made?

Sad!

The same thing happens for many who *eventually* come to Christ.

They hear the Gospel with its promise of forgiveness & new life & know they *should* respond.

But they delay. The Spirit urges them to repent & believe, but they argue themselves out with the thought that they need to "*investigate*" things first.

"Don't be hasty. Don't get all caught up in emotion."

"Be cool & rational. Check it out and if it proves to be real, then you can commit."

But what often happens is that the delay becomes the time when more foolish choices are made that sink the person deeper into sin with consequences that are long lasting.

Many of us in this room tonight can say that we heard the Gospel but delayed our response and that delay became the setting for some really bad stuff that we live with to this day.

Rare is the believer who doesn't say – "I wish I'd given my life to Christ *sooner* rather than later."

16Then the people went out and plundered the tents of the Syrians. So a seah of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and 2 seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

Just as Elisha has foretold - because God's word **CANNOT** fail!

17Now the king had appointed the officer on whose hand he leaned to

have charge of the gate. But the people trampled him in the gate, and he died, just as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him. ¹⁸So it happened just as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, “2 seahs of barley for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour for a shekel, shall be *sold* tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria.” ¹⁹Then that officer had answered the man of God, and said, “Now look, *if* the LORD would make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?” And he had said, “In fact, you shall see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it.” ²⁰ And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate, and he died.

It's sad but true - those who *mock* the Word of God, *without repenting*, will know His judgment.

10. The Shunamite's land restored 8:1-6

¹Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, “Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for 7 years.”

In ch. 4 we read of a family in the village of Shunem with whom Elisha used to stay.

For the woman's kindness, God had healed her barrenness & given her a son.

But he'd died while still a lad & Elisha was used by God to restore him to life.

Now that a time of famine was to come, the prophet warns them to find refuge someplace else.

Let me draw a lesson from this.

In the careers of both Elijah & Elisha, God used them to inform the people when the calamities befalling them were the discipline or judgment of God.

Knowing their root cause, their remedy was obvious - repent & return to the Lord.

Here we see Elisha warning a godly family of a long famine so they could take measures to deal with it – in this case, to flee.

We ought to expect the same.

Let's pray for discernment about the troubles hammering our land – are they normal, run of the mill events that are part & parcel of living in a fallen world, or are they the judgment of a holy God for the evils of our age.

Let's ask God to raise up some *obvious people of God*, some Elijahs & Elishas who will boldly declare what's what & who can counsel the godly on what to do.

²So the woman arose and did according to the saying of the man of God, and she went with her household and dwelt in the land of the Philistines 7 years. ³It came to pass, at the end of 7 years, that the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went to make an appeal to the king for her house and for her land.

Because while she was gone, the land had been taken over by squatters.

⁴Then the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, “Tell me, please, all the great things Elisha has done.”

The last time we saw Gehazi, Elisha's servant, was when he'd become a leper in judgment for his deceit & greed.

How he ends up talking to the king is a mystery, but many scholars think after the lifting of the Syrian siege of Samaria, Jehoram was so curious about Elisha, he sent for his old servant and asked for him to relate his experiences with the man of God.

Being so close to the story of the 4 lepers who discovered the empty Syrian camp – it's just possible Gehazi was one of them.

And now that he's become something of a hero to the people of Samaria, he has this interview with the king.

⁵Now 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." ⁶And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed a certain officer for her, saying, "Restore all that was hers, and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now."

Jehoram realized the favor God had bestowed on this woman and realized he ought to show her the same consideration.

Maybe Jerhoram's coming around.

11. Hazael takes Syrian throne 8:7-15

⁷Then Elisha went to Damascus,

Where of course, due to his previous history with the Syrians, (Naaman & the capture of the Syrian army) he was highly respected.

and Ben-Hadad king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying,

"The man of God has come here." ⁸And the king said to Hazael, "Take a present in your hand, and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?' "

Hazael was a trusted assistant to the Syrian king.

Too bad he was so trusted – because he was a snake!

⁹So Hazael went to meet him and took a present with him, of every good thing of Damascus, 40 camel-loads; and he came and stood before him, and said, "Your son Ben-Hadad king of Syria has sent me to you, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?' " ¹⁰And Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover.' However the LORD has shown me that he will really die."

Elijah *isn't* telling Hazael to *lie* to Ben Hadad.

The king would have recovered – if not for the fact that Hazael will kill him before the recovery is complete.

God then gives Elisha a vision of the trouble this man Hazael will bring to the Syrians, & to the sister kingdoms of Israel & Judah.

¹¹Then he [Elisha] set his countenance in a stare until he [Hazael] was ashamed; and the man of God wept. ¹² And Hazael said, "Why is my

lord weeping?” He answered, “Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel: Their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword; and you will dash their children, and rip open their women with child.”

Far from the angry prophet who stands on high denouncing the sins of the people and gleefully calling down the wrath of God in judgment – Elisha weeps heavy tears of grief over the suffering to come on his people.

Any one who announces judgment without tears of sorrow is no prophet of God.

Jonah was sent by God to Nineveh to announce judgment & delighted to do so, but he learned that he was very far from the heart of God.

I shudder whenever I hear people today who with angry & self-righteous words proclaim the judgment of God.

I recently heard of a group that was going to churches where funerals were being held for military people killed in Iraq & Afghanistan.

They have the *audacity* to picket & denounce those slain as murderers – saying their death is the judgment of God.

There are no tears from these people. They’re almost gleeful at the loss of American lives because they see it as the judgment of God on a wicked nation – and they love it!

They are modern Sons of Thunder: Whom Jesus *rebuked* by saying – “That’s not My way!”

¹³So Hazael said, “But what *is* your servant—a dog, that he should do this gross thing?” And Elisha answered, “The LORD has shown me that you *will become king over Syria.*” ¹⁴Then he departed from Elisha, and came to his master, who said to him, “What did Elisha say to you?” And he answered, “He told me you would surely recover.”

¹⁵But it happened on the next day that he took a thick cloth and dipped *it* in water, and spread *it* over his face so that he died; and Hazael reigned in his place.

He assassinated Ben Hadad by smothering him so that it would look like he died of natural causes.