

2 Kings 07 - Annals of Israel: The Syrians Flee

II. The divided kingdom from the North-South division until the Assyrian invasion (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 17:41)

(13) Israel during Elisha's Ministry (2 Kings 2:1—8:15)

(E) Elisha's miracles reveal Yahweh as protector (2 Kings 6:8—8:6)

(b) Through Elisha the Lord protected Samaria from the Arameans (6:24—7:20)

(iii) Elisha predicted an end to the famine within one day (7:1-2)

(iv) As announced by four lepers, the Lord fulfills Elisha's word and delivered the city (7:3-20)

2 Kings 7

(iii) Elisha predicted an end to the famine within one day (7:1-2)

1 Then Elisha said, "Listen to the word of the LORD; this is what the LORD says: 'About this time tomorrow a **measure** of fine flour *will be sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.'"

1 Then Elisha said, "Listen to the word of the LORD; thus says the LORD, 'Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour will be *sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.'"

1 So Elisha responded, "Listen to this message from the LORD! 'This is what the LORD says: "At about this time tomorrow, in Samaria's city gate, a seah of finely ground flour will sell for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel.'"

1 Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

- Within 24 hours the siege would be over and there would be plenty to eat

- "...measure" - *seah*, about seven quarts; this amount of flour would sell for a shekel (about two-fifths of an ounce) and two *seahs* (ca. 13-14 quarts) of barley (for cattle to eat) would sell for the same price (Cf. v16) at the gate of the city, where business of this sort was normally transacted.

— These prices were not unusually low but compared with what the people had been paying during the famine (Cf. 6:25) they were great bargains.

Man's extremity is God's opportunity of magnifying His own power; His time to appear for His people is when their strength is gone (Cf. Deut 32:36).

2 The royal officer on whose hand the king was leaning responded to the man of God and said, "Even if the LORD were to make windows in heaven, could this thing happen?" Then he said, "Behold, you are going to see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat any of it."

2 The royal officer on whose hand the king was leaning answered the man of God and said, "Behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?" Then he said, "Behold, you will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat of it."

2 But the royal attendant on whom the king depended responded to the man of God: "Look here! Even if the LORD were to open a window in the sky, how could this happen?" He replied, "No, you look! You'll see it with your eyes, but you won't eat any of it!"

2 Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

- The officer assisting Jehoram (Cf. 7:17 and the comments on 5:8) found this prophecy incredible. His retort expressed his utter disbelief that God would or could do this.

— In this, he could be compared with many in Israel who had abandoned Yahweh for Baal

— Elisha replied that the officer would see the miracle with his own eyes; it would indeed take place. But because of his unbelief he would not experience the blessing (Cf. v17).

(iv) As announced by four lepers, the Lord fulfills Elisha's word and delivered the city (7:3-20)

3 Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, "Why are we sitting here until we die?"

3 Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, "Why do we sit here until we die?"

3 Now there happened to be four lepers who were at that very moment at the entrance to the city gate. As they were talking with one another, they said, "Why are we sitting here waiting to die?"

3 And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?"

The four lepers likewise represented many in Israel whose hopeless destiny was death, because of their uncleanness (v3). They were, however, the undeserving recipients of God's grace. They became the source of blessing (life) to others when they reported what God had graciously provided for all the hopeless Samaritans (v9-10). Understandably, many preachers have used them as examples of sinners saved by grace.

4 If we say, 'We will enter the city,' then the famine is in the city and we will die there; but if we sit here, we will also die. Now then come, and let's go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they spare us, we will live; and if they kill us, then we will die."

4 If we say, 'We will enter the city,' then the famine is in the city and we will die there; and if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they spare us, we will live; and if they kill us, we will but die."

4 If we tell ourselves, 'Let's remain in the city,' we'll die there since there's famine in the city. But if we sit here, we'll die, too. So let's go over to the Arameans! If they spare our lives, we'll live, and if they kill us...we're dying anyway!"

4 If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

- The four lepers may have been housed in huts just outside the city gate; they were isolated from contact with non-lepers in Israel

— Of their three options, they correctly concluded that their best choice lay in giving themselves up to the Arameans. They might be killed but, they reasoned, that would be better than dying gradually of starvation.

5 So they got up at twilight to go to the camp of the Arameans; when they came to the outskirts of the camp of the Arameans, behold, there was no one there.

5 They arose at twilight to go to the camp of the Arameans; when they came to the outskirts of the camp of the Arameans, behold, there was no one there.

5 So they got up at dusk and went out to the Aramean encampment. But when they arrived at the outskirts of the Aramean encampment, there was no one there!

5 And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.

6 For the Lord had made the army of the Arameans hear a sound of chariots, a sound of horses, *that is*, the sound of a great army; and they said to one another, "Behold, the king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians against us, to attack us!"

6 For the Lord had caused the army of the Arameans to hear a sound of chariots and a sound of horses, *even* the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, "Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us."

6 The LORD had made the Aramean army hear the sounds of chariots, horses, and a large army, so they told one another, "Look! The king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites

and the Egyptians to come attack us!"

6 For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.

- The text explains the reason for the soldiers' departure: The Lord had caused them to hear noises from the north and the south that made them think the armies of the Hittites and Egyptians were coming to attack.

7 So they got up and fled at twilight, and abandoned their tents, their horses, and their donkeys—*indeed* the camp *itself*, just as it was; and they fled for their lives.

7 Therefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents and their horses and their donkeys, *even* the camp just as it was, and fled for their life.

7 So the Arameans got up and ran away in the gathering darkness. They left behind their tents, horses, and donkeys just as they were—and fled for their lives!

7 Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, *even* the camp as it was, and fled for their life.

- God dispersed the besieging Aramean army supernaturally (v6; Cf. 2:11; 6:17). He accomplished this deliverance through no work of those whom He saved.

8 When these men with leprosy came to the outskirts of the camp, they entered one tent and ate and drank, and carried from there silver, gold, and clothes, and they went and hid *them*; then they returned and entered another tent, and carried *valuables* from there *also*, and went and hid *them*.

8 When these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they entered one tent and ate and drank, and carried from there silver and gold and clothes, and went and hid *them*; and they returned and entered another tent and carried from there *also*, and went and hid *them*.

8 When the lepers arrived at the outskirts of the encampment, they entered one tent and ate and drank. Then they carried off from there some silver, gold, and clothes, and went out and hid them. After this, they returned, entered another tent, raided it, and went and hid all of that, too!

8 And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.

9 Then they said to one another, "We are not doing the right thing. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent *about it*; if we wait until the morning light,

punishment will overtake us. Now then come, let's go and inform the king's household."

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."

9 But then they told each other, "We're not doing the right thing. This is a day of good news, but if we keep quiet until morning, we're sure to be punished! So let's leave and go tell the king's household!"

9 Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

- But gradually their sense of duty to their fellow Samaritans convicted them. Also they reasoned that if they failed to report the situation, others would discover in the morning that the enemy had fled and they would be punished for not announcing the situation to the starving population.

- Rather than suffer as criminals, they preferred to be treated as heroes. So they decided to return to Samaria and proclaim their good news.

10 So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, saying, "We came to the camp of the Arameans, and behold, there was no one there, nor a human voice; only the horses tied and the donkeys tied, and the tents just as they were."

10 So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and they told them, saying, "We came to the camp of the Arameans, and behold, there was no one there, nor the voice of man, only the horses tied and the donkeys tied, and the tents just as they were."

10 So they left, called out to the city gatekeepers, and reported to them: "We went out to the Aramean encampment, and there was nobody there! Not even the sound of men—only horses and donkeys tied up, and tents left just as they were!"

10 So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were.

- The lepers returned to Samaria and told the city gatekeepers their story. The news spread like wildfire through the city during the night

11 And the gatekeepers called and announced *it* inside the king's house.

11 The gatekeepers called and told *it* within the king's household.

11 The gatekeepers announced the report to the king's attendants,

11 And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within.

12 Then the king got up in the night and said to his servants, "I will now tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know that we are hungry; so they have left the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, 'When they come out of the city, we will capture them alive and get into the city!'"

12 Then the king arose in the night and said to his servants, "I will now tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know that we are hungry; therefore they have gone from the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, 'When they come out of the city, we will capture them alive and get into the city!'"

12 so the king got up in the middle of the night and ordered his servants: "Let me explain what the Arameans have done to us. They know that we're hungry, so they've left their encampment to conceal themselves in the surrounding fields. They're telling themselves, 'When they come out of the city, we'll capture them alive and enter the city!'"

12 And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they 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.

- But the king suspected a trap. He calculated that since the Arameans had not been able to break into Samaria, they had planned this apparent retreat to draw the Samaritans out, leaving the city open to invasion

— Rather than asking Elisha what was going on, Jehoram relied on his own wisdom, which gave him no comfort

13 One of his servants responded and said, "Please, have some *men* take five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city. Behold, they *will be in any case* like all the multitude of Israel who are left in it; behold, they *will be* like all the multitude of Israel who have *already* perished, so let us send *them* and see."

13 One of his servants said, "Please, let some *men* take five of the horses which remain, which are left in the city. Behold, they *will be in any case* like all the multitude of Israel who are left in it; behold, they *will be in any case* like all the multitude of Israel who have already perished, so let us send and see."

13 One of his attendants suggested, "Please, let's take five of the remaining horses, since those who remain here will end up like the rest of Israel, which has already died, and we'll send them out to look."

13 And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed:) and let us send and see.

- One of Jehoram's officers proposed sending only five horsemen out to scout the Aramean camp. If these soldiers were caught, their deaths would only be hastened; he thought death was inescapable for all the people in Samaria because of the famine

14 Therefore they took two chariots with horses, and the king sent *them* after the army of the Arameans, saying, "Go and see."

14 They took therefore two chariots with horses, and the king sent after the army of the Arameans, saying, "Go and see."

14 So they took two chariots and horses, and the king sent them out after the Aramean army with the orders, "Go and look!"

14 They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see.

15 They went after them to the Jordan, and behold, all the way was full of clothes and equipment which the Arameans had thrown away when they fled in a hurry. Then the messengers returned and informed the king.

15 They went after them to the Jordan, and behold, all the way was full of clothes and equipment which the Arameans had thrown away in their haste. Then the messengers returned and told the king.

15 They went out in the direction of the Jordan River,⁶ and the entire roadway was strewn with clothes and equipment that the Arameans had abandoned in their haste to leave! So the messengers returned and reported to the king.

15 And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king.

- The chariot drivers followed a trail of discarded clothing and equipment all the way to the Jordan River, about 25 miles from Samaria. Israel's enemy then had crossed the Jordan and was far away. The drivers returned to Samaria and announced the good news to the king.

16 So the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. Then a measure of fine flour *was sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in accordance with the word of the LORD.

16 So the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. Then a measure of fine flour *was sold* for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

16 At this, the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. At that time, a seah of finely ground flour was sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, in accordance with the LORD's message.

16 And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

- The king apparently threw the gates open before the excited multitudes who streamed out to find food and booty

— Those who found the food first were able to sell it to their neighbors for the same prices the LORD had predicted through Elisha (Cf. v1)

17 Now the king appointed the royal officer on whose hand he leaned to be in charge of the gate; but the people trampled on him at the gate, and he died, just as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him.

17 Now the king appointed the royal officer on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate; but the people trampled on him at the gate, and he died just as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him.

17 Meanwhile, the king appointed the same royal attendant on whom he depended to take control of the city gate, but the people trampled him to death in the gate, just as the man of God had told the king when the king came down to him.

17 And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him.

18 So it happened just as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, "Two measures of barley for a shekel and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, will be *sold* about this time tomorrow at the gate of Samaria."

18 It happened just as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, "Two measures of barley for a shekel and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, will be *sold* tomorrow about this time at the gate of Samaria."

18 It happened just as the man of God had spoken to the king:

"At about this time tomorrow, in Samaria's city gate, a seah of finely ground flour will sell for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel."

18 And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria:

19 *At that time* the royal officer had responded to the man of God and said, "Now even if the LORD were to make windows in heaven, could such a thing as this happen?" And he had said, "Behold, you are going to see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat any of it."

19 Then the royal officer answered the man of God and said, "Now behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?" And he said, "Behold, you will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat of it."

19 But the royal attendant on whom the king depended responded to the man of God: "Look here! Even if the LORD were to make a window in the sky, how could this happen?" He replied, "No, you look! You'll see it with your eyes, but you won't eat any of it!"

19 And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

20 And this is what happened to him, for the people trampled on him at the gate and he died.

20 And so it happened to him, for the people trampled on him at the gate and he died.

20 And so it happened to him, because the people trampled him in the city gate and he died.

20 And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

- So heavy was the traffic through the gate that the officer who assisted the king (Cf. v2 and the comment on 5:18) and who had been stationed there to insure an orderly departure, was trampled to death

— This man had ridiculed God's ability to do what He said He would do (Cf. v2), so the fate that Elisha had predicted overtook him

— Yahweh, not Baal, provides food; in fact God even foretold exactly when He would provide it

— The remarkable way in which God kept the Samaritans safe and sustained them should have turned them and the king back to Him

— God's future discipline of the Israelites can be understood better in the light of their rejection of His many gracious and miraculous provisions for them

2 Kings 7 is one of many sections in Scripture composed in a chiasmic (crossing) literary structure that stresses a particular point in the story. We could outline this story as follows:

- A. The royal officer's unbelief (v1-2a)
- B. Elisha's prediction of relief (v2b)
- C. The lepers' decision (v3-5)
- D. Yahweh's salvation (v6)
- C. The leper's deliverance (v7-10)
- B. The fulfillment of Elisha's prediction (v11-15)
- A. The royal officer's judgment (v16-20)

This structure emphasizes the central element, Yahweh's salvation, and teaches other lessons in concentric circles of significance. These points include the role of the lepers in bringing news of deliverance to the doomed Samaritans. They were evangelists in the truest sense: heralds of good news. The value of God's revelation is another lesson, as is the folly of rejecting that revelation.