

2 Kings 6-7 - God is Able

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Let's go ahead and open our Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 6. We're continuing to deal with the ministry of Elisha and the work that he did in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during a time when Israel was for the most part apostate. That basically just means they've fallen away from the Lord.

Sometimes that's when our ministry is the most effective, in case you've ever had thoughts of going somewhere where there's more godliness. Sometimes it happens. I've actually talked to some people who have talked about the condition of the United States of America and they've talked about, I've contemplated going somewhere else. Well, that's okay if the Lord leads you somewhere else. But sometimes when the world is heading in a downward spiral, which we're seeing it do today, this is when our ministries are the most needed. This is when the world needs us.

Where are you going to go exactly? I mean, what are you actually looking to find? I certainly would like to live in a different world. I know you probably would, too, but what are you hoping to find? God needs us here. God is wanting to use us right here, right where we are to bring truth and hope and light.

When the Bible says that we're the salt of the earth or the light of the world those things pertain to the opposite. We forget that sometimes, don't we? It's wonderful hearing Jesus say you are the light of the world. Where does the light shine best? In the darkness. You are the salt of the earth. Where is salt most needed? Where there is decay. It inhibits the decay process. Salt keeps things from deteriorating as rapidly as they might otherwise.

You and I are called to be those things. We're called to be light in darkness; we're called to be salt in deterioration and decay. So anyway, maybe it's a good thing to think about.

Here's Elisha, quite possibly one of the greatest prophets to ever live and minister in the nation of Israel, and yet, what a dark time he ministered in; what a difficult season that he ministered in. But chapter 6 of 2 Kings continues to just give us some various narratives about things that happened during Elisha's ministry to show that the power of God was working through him in an extraordinary way.

The word, extraordinary, obviously—it's a compound word, extraordinary, and it means beyond the ordinary. What that means is you wouldn't expect these things to happen in an ordinary sort of circumstance. They were very extraordinary. And this is the first one, verse 1. It says,

“Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, “See, the place where we dwell under your charge is too small for us. (In other words, we need to build some bigger digs here.)”² Let us go to the Jordan and each of us get there a log, and let us make a place for us to dwell there.” And he answered, “(Fine.) Go.”³ Then one of them said, “Be pleased to go with your servants.” And he answered, “(Okay) I will go.”⁴ So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees (so they got busy doing the building project that is underway).⁵ But as one was felling a log, his axe head fell into the water, and he cried out, “Alas, my master! It was borrowed.”⁶ Then the man of God said, “Where did it fall?” When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw it in there and made the iron float.⁷ And he said, “Take it up.” So he reached out his hand and took it.”

Interesting story. I'm not exactly sure how to apply it to your life. It's just one of those interesting stories in the Bible where you see this situation, this needful situation, that God obviously rescues them from, but in such a crazy mixed-up sort of a way that you end up going, so exactly what was that all about? What was the stick? Why was that necessary? You can say the same thing when you read through the Gospels and you find out how Jesus healed some people. I mean, taking some dirt and then spitting on it, and making mud and then smoothing it onto somebody's eyes, and then saying, there, go wash.

You know what I'm saying? What a strange thing to do. But we tend to want to try to find some meaning out of it, some purpose, so that we can understand better. And just about the time we think it through for a little while, we keep reading it, and we find out Jesus did it completely differently the next time. There were other times that he just— it was different situation, different methodology.

So we have to be careful trying to make too much out of some of the methodologies. I heard somebody joking one time. We try to build on things, first church of the mud made with spittle thing, and try to make it something that we can hang our hat on. But you can't.

So what have you got here? You got Elisha coming to the rescue of this prophet who's working. They're cutting down these trees, but they're near the Jordan, the banks of the Jordan. It's obvious— I imagine trees would probably grow really

well there, right on the banks of the Jordan. He's chopping this tree down, and the head comes off the handle of the ax, and he says to Elisha, oh, it was borrowed. I can't afford to repay the man that I borrowed this from. It's probably expensive, who knows? So Elisha cuts off a stick and throws it in the water. Of course, the stick is going to float, and right where he drops it in, the axe head comes to the surface of the water.

That doesn't do that, by the way, naturally. I just don't know if you knew that. That's called supernatural. This thing floats, and he says, okay, grab it. And it's like, wow, how crazy is that? But lest you and I try to figure it out too much, we just have to chalk it up and say our God is able and He has a million and one ways to get around to dealing with whatever issue we may be dealing with.

Have you ever had somebody say something like, I was going to pray about it but I think I thought God was too busy. I've had people say that to me, honestly, which is an interesting thing to say about God. You wonder what their view of God really, necessarily, is when they see Him as being too busy for anything.

But the point is it was an axe head. I mean, on the grand scale of important things in life, I don't think that one rates too high, and yet this miracle took place to restore this axe head for this guy so he didn't have to buy one for this guy— whoever he borrowed it from. Seems like a pretty small thing, and yet, God took care of it.

Okay, so we move on here. It says in verse 8,

“Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, he took counsel with his servants, saying, “At such and such a place shall be my camp.” ⁹ But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, “Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there.” ¹⁰ And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God told him. (Obviously he sent a scout to find out if it was actually so.) Thus he used to warn him, so that he saved himself there more than once or twice.”

So the prophet Elisha kept the king of Israel in the know about the movements of the king of Syria. When the king of Syria would encroach upon Israelite land, the prophet Elisha would go to the king and say, hey, don't go; don't take your men and go this direction because there's an ambush and the king of Syria is waiting there for you. And so the king of Israel would send a scout out there to stealthily come out and check out the thing, and come back and say, yeah, he's right. It's exactly where the king of Syria was camped with his army. Okay. Well, now we know.

It says he warned him and *“he saved himself there”* – and notice at the end of verse 10, it says, *“more than once or twice.”* That's an old way of saying this happened repeatedly.

And this is great, verse 11,

“And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing, and he called his servants and said to them, “Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?”

In other words, the king of Syria believed he had a mole in his midst, so he gets all of his captains and leaders and stuff together, and says, all right, which one of you guys is ratting on me and giving information, feeding information to the king of Israel? He's really troubled by this thing.

Verse 12 says,

“And one of his servants said, “None, my lord (we're all faithful here), O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.” (That's a scary thought.)¹³ And he said, “Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him.””

Now, you got to stop and think about this for just a moment. I mean, I know they don't teach critical thinking today in schools, but this is one of those times when it's like—think this thing through just for a second, God has been circumventing any military action from Syria to Israel because He knows all things, and He was sharing it with the prophet Elisha in such a way that Elisha became privy to the movements of the king of Syria, and he passed it along to the king of Israel.

Now the king of Syria says, let's go and let's find out where Elisha is so we can capture him. How successful do you think that's going to be? I mean, let's think this thing through for just a moment. God has been able to thwart you at every turn, and now you want to go capture this guy so God can't do that anymore? This is dumb on so many levels. I mean, it just really is. Even if God allowed Elisha to be captured, even if He did, He can raise up another prophet to do the very same thing. God can speak to anyone to accomplish this. Ultimately, you've got to get rid of God, and that's not going to happen.

See, that's called critical thinking and you just think it through. What the guy should have done is he should have just thought it through properly and said, I think my goose is good and cooked, so we need to probably make peace with

this God of Israel because He knows what we do. No, but that's not the direction we're going. We're going to try to beat God at His own game. Good luck with that one.

Anyway, we'll see how this goes here. So he says, go see where he is so I can seize him; and it was told. *"Behold, he is in Dothan."* Don't really know why Elisha was in Dothan at the time, but it says, *"¹⁴ So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army (notice that – a great army; so he didn't just send a few people; he sent a huge army), and they came by night and (they) surrounded the city.*

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?""

So here— get this picture in your mind. The servant goes out; he's just probably doing his chores. He's going out to get some water or whatever the thing might be, and he goes out and looks on the hillside around the city of Dothan, and he sees these mounted warriors, this whole army around the thing. You can see the picture in your mind, can't you? Probably drops his buckets and runs back into the house, and he says to Elisha, we're dead. We're dead. There's a whole army surrounding the city. What are we going to do now? There's no possible way of escape. They've got us hemmed in. There's no way we can get out of here alive.

And I love the way this story goes. Verse 16,

"He said (and this is Elisha speaking now), "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

Is that cool or what? I mean, this is like made for TV movie, don't you think? No, this is made for the big screen. This would be so cool.

Spiritually speaking, the servant of Elisha could not see the presence of God's heavenly host all around the city. So when the enemy comes to attack, where's the Lord? He's right there. But is He immediately perceived with human eyes? Obviously not. And so, notice that Elisha prays for his servant. He literally prays for it, Lord, give him eyes to see.

We need to do that on a regular basis, don't we? We need to see with spiritual eyes. Do you, guys, understand? You're sitting in a room right now, and this

room is very real from a physical perspective. You're sitting on a chair, and it's very real from a physical perspective. You can reach down, and you can touch it, and you can feel it with your hand. You breathe in the air, and you see light, and you hear sound, and it's all very real.

But do you understand, people, that the spiritual realm is no less real than that which we perceive with our five senses? We don't perceive it, however; therefore, we don't take it into account because we don't—I'm not constant. I mean, I don't walk through my house and bump into angels. And so, I just assume they're not there. But are they? Probably. Yeah, probably. Bible says that angels are ministering spirits sent to minister to God's people who are receiving salvation and so forth. Are there angels in this room right now? Probably. You can't see them because we're so geared into the physical, the sensual – meaning not sexual, but sensual; meaning part of our senses, our five senses.

So Elisha has to pray for his servant, Lord, open his eyes. It reminds me of Jesus, when He spoke to the people, He would say, let him who has ears to hear, hear. Let him who has ears to hear.

Listen, here's the thing, when you come to Jesus Christ, make Him your Savior, you receive the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit. That's just the package, okay? The Spirit of God comes to live within you. You become a temple— not the temple—a temple of the Holy Spirit. And one of the many works of the Holy Spirit in our lives is spiritual perception – the ability to perceive that which is spiritual.

Well, I don't know if I've ever perceived anything that spiritual. Oh yes, you have. That's how dead we are to the life of the Spirit. We don't even know when we're even perceiving the Spirit sometimes.

But listen, if you've ever read the Word of God or heard the Word of God and benefited from it, you've perceived spiritually because the Bible says that the Word of God, the truth of God, is spiritual. It is Spirit in nature, the truth of God. And the Bible tells us the man without the Spirit, he can't appreciate it. In fact, he considers it what? Foolishness, right? It's foolishness to him because he has an unspiritual mind. In other words, it hasn't been enlightened and made sensitive to the realm of the Spirit. And so, he just reads the Word of God and he's like, yeah, nothing there.

But you received because you perceived. You receive from the Word of God, you perceive what it says, the meaning that is there, and God applies it to your life. That's all spiritual. That's a work of the Spirit.

Conviction is a work of the Spirit. Have you ever done something you know you shouldn't have done and you just felt like a big fat scumbag – either while you were doing it or shortly thereafter? Yeah, conviction. The conviction of the Holy Spirit in you. You've grieved the Spirit. That's spiritual perception.

Now, obviously what we're reading about here is pretty dynamic. I mean, to open one's eyes to see the spirit realm in such a way as to see the heavenly hosts, mounted and ready for battle— yeah, which sounds pretty stinking awesome to me. But still, we perceive even more than we may even be aware of.

I talked to many people who, during the middle of the night, have just been awakened to 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, and just told get on your knees and pray – and sometimes it's very specific who to pray for. My pastor back in Great Falls told me about a time when the Lord just woke him up in the middle of the night and just said, pray for your sister; then comes to find out the next morning he gets a phone call, saying—this is not the other thing—there was just a need that went on in the wee hours of the morning and that need for prayer.

But that spiritual perception, that receptivity where the Spirit moves upon our hearts and says this or that, pray or do this. Some people have given gifts to people they didn't even know that they were in any financial difficulty, but they were just moved by the Spirit. It's like, God just told me to give you this 500. I don't even know if you need it, but here you go, goodbye, sort of a thing; and the person's like, we were praying about this just this morning. Where does that come from? It comes from the Spirit.

Here's the thing, as Christians, we need to understand the life of the Spirit, and understand that what's going on out here, and what's coming in through our ears and eyes and so forth, this is all very much a distraction for the most part. And if we become so tuned to the physical elements of perceiving life, we will begin to become dull and insensitive to the Spirit.

Listening to the voice of the Spirit is something that takes time, and it is a learned process – learning to tune one's heart to the voice of God. There are things that we can do to make ourselves more sensitive to the voice of the Spirit. And one of the tried-and-true methods that God's Word has shown throughout the years is fasting and prayer.

People, really, fasting for the most part confuses a lot of people. What's that all about? What's fasting for? It is a way of increasing sensitivity – and it does. It truly has a way of increasing our spiritual sensitivity. You say, well, how does that happen? It's by saying no to the fleshly appetites. It's denying one's fleshly appetites – not for a long time; for a period.

And I am fully convinced that fasting can take on so many more levels than just what you put in your mouth, because our fleshly appetites go far beyond what we put in here. We can be drawn in a fleshly way to many things in this life. And to set those things aside, the Corinthians talks about couples, married couples, fasting from physical relations so that they might devote themselves to prayer. That's a kind of fasting.

When we set aside the things that would otherwise clamor for our attention—and boy, there's a lot of things, aren't there, that really clamor for attention? I mean, eating meals – that's at least three times a day; and if you're my youngest son, it's about six times a day. That really takes up a lot of our day. When you think about meal prep and all the things that go along with it, you're thinking about what you're going to eat, and when, and how much, and this, and should we, and that way, and we got to go grocery shop.

If you just take that all, and just set it aside for a period of time, and just say, God, I'm going to take that time that I would otherwise spend doing all of those things, and I'm going to focus on You in prayer. The time I would otherwise be spent eating, the time I would otherwise spend watching television, watching movies, reading novels, shopping— there's a lot of things you can give up while you're fasting. But again, there is an increase in spiritual perception when we resist the fleshly impulses that would otherwise dominate our existence in so many ways.

Anyway, this is a very cool story. So he prays for his servant. Now I love this next part, verse 18. It says,

“And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD (look at that) and said, “Please strike this people with blindness.” So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha.”

Stop there for just a moment. Let me explain this. There are two important things that you need to see here. First of all, I want you to notice that even though Elisha knew that the angelic hosts were all around and gathered there to protect him, he didn't stop there. Did you notice that? He didn't just rest on his laurels. When the army, the Syrian army, started coming down the hillside

toward the city, he prayed. He made his request known to the Lord. I think that's been interesting sort of a thing.

But the second thing that's interesting here about this is, he says, Lord, strike them with blindness. Now you're going to see, as we get into the text here further into this story, it's not blindness as in I can't see anything, I'm groping around, somebody lead me. It's a dullness. It's a—we use the word, stupor; we talked about that on Sunday. Paul talked about it in Romans, and this is a similar sort of a thing.

As you continue to read the story here, you find out that, verse 19, Elisha strikes up a conversation with these guys, and he comes to them, and he says to them, *“This is not the way (that’s great), and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.” And he led them to Samaria.* That's the capital of Israel; and by the way, that's a 10-mile walk, okay?

So he says, hey, yeah, you guys came to the wrong place. Let me let me show you where you need to go here. Follow me. And he leads them to Samaria. Verse 20,

“As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, “O LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.” So the LORD opened their eyes and they saw, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.”

In other words, they were in the center of the enemy camp. They came to destroy Elisha, and suddenly they find themselves— it's like, he just says, okay, God, lift the veil. I honestly believe that they could see but they couldn't perceive. It comes back to that same idea of perception. They could see but there was this stupor; there was this veil. And so Elisha is able to say, oh, you came to the wrong town here. Come on. You don't think they know where Samaria is. So he's just telling them, hey, let's go. And they get to Samaria, and then he says, okay, Lord, lift the veil; and they're like, what in the world? We're here in Samaria.

So supposedly, the gates are shut. They're basically caught. It says,

“²¹ As soon as the king of Israel saw them (and by the way, the king of Israel at this time would be a Jehoram), he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down?” ²² He answered, “You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow?”

In other words, when you go out to battle and you capture prisoners of war, would you strike them down? And they wouldn't have, so he's basically saying, why would you strike down those that didn't even have any means of getting here? This was the work of the Lord. So he tells him this, *“Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.”*

But the king did way more than that. It says in verse 23,

“So he prepared for them a great feast (and that's hard to do with just bread and water, so you can tell he probably did a lot more than that), and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. (Look at this.) And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel.”

Isn't that interesting? I guess there's more than one way to take care of your enemy, huh? God has lots of different ways, but about the time that you and I think that we got this thing dialed in, God uses kindness. Kindness. He puts them into this stupor and allows them to be led into Samaria where they sit them down and give them a feast, and then send them on their way. Go home. Tell the king what happened.

Can you imagine the stories they told when they went home? Well, we went right to where we were told that Elisha was, but when we got there, we were told that wasn't the place, and then they led us to Samaria. You probably hear the king asking them, you guys didn't know what Samaria looked like? How could you get led right into the city of Samaria? I don't know. They didn't have any explanation for this thing because God put a veil over their eyes and they couldn't see.

But it says here, as a result, the Syrians didn't come again to raid the land of Israel. Doesn't mean the Syrians are done attacking Israel on an army level. Do you understand the difference between raids and full-out battle? A raid is when the Syrians would come into the land to raid their harvest, to take their crops away, to steal their animals. It was like marauders, thieves—and that's what a raid would basically do. But that doesn't mean just because they're not going to raid Israel they're not going to come up against Israel with their army.

And we find out that is, in fact, what happens in the next section, verse 24 and following.

“Afterward (and this tells us, after the previous event) Ben-hadad king of Syria mustered his entire army and went up and besieged Samaria.”

So this isn't a raid this time; this is an all-out siege against the city. Do you guys understand what a siege is? It doesn't mean they come and attack and start shooting arrows and throwing spears. It just means they come with their army and they camp around the city. That's all they do. It's like a big RV party, and they come in, and they literally surround the city with their camp, and they got thousands of men, and they set up camp so nobody can go into the city, and nobody can go out.

Basically, the methodology there is just victory by starvation, right? Because you know that in the city they only have so much food. So how long do we have to stay here? Some sieges lasted years in history, like five years or longer. Isn't that crazy? What a crazy way to do battle. And it would depend on how big the city was, how many supplies they had, and how much water. Sometimes they would build cities on a river stream or over an underground spring so that they could dig and have wells in the city. They could keep themselves alive for a long time because they can grow things and they have water to drink. But in most of the cities, that's probably not the case, and it's only a matter of time before you starve them out.

And as you go on and read in this section—and it gets pretty semi-dark here, but it tells us that—verse 25,

“And there was a great famine in Samaria, as they besieged it, (to a point where) until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and the fourth part of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver.” And that's basically just a way of telling you the prices were extremely high for anything even— and this is unclean food, by the way, the food they are referring to, because things are in such short supply within the city.

And by the way, that reference in your Bible to dove's dung, you may have something else in your Bible. Those of you that have an NIV, your Bible translates this, seed pods, not dove's dung or dove's droppings, which by the way, some Bible translators believe they would use for fuel. But the NIV renders it seed pods—and here's why.

There was a plant back in Israel, while it's still there—there was a plant that, back at that time in Israel, was called dove's dung or dove's droppings. It was essentially a plant with an edible bulb. Today, it is known as the Star of David, and it still grows and has this edible bulb. It could be that is what's being referred to here—and that frankly would make more sense, since they're talking about food and the starvation that is slowly coming upon them here.

But this is where the story gets real dark because food is now in incredibly short supply; it says,

“²⁶ Now 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 will not help you, how shall I help you? From the threshing floor, or from the winepress?’”

²⁸ And the king asked her, ‘What is your trouble?’ 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 on the next day I said to her, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him.’ But she has hidden her son.’”

³⁰ When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes (and rightly so)—now he was passing by on the wall—and the people looked, and behold, he had sackcloth beneath his garments (that means) on his body—”

You might remember that sackcloth was made of black goat’s hair, and it was meant to be—well, it was very uncomfortable, but it was used as a sign of repentance. It was a sign of self-abasement for me to wear. I mean, this is like worse than the worst wool right next to the skin, and it was a way of just showing my horror, my sorrow.

What's really interesting though about this scene that we're reading, this horrific scene, is that this level of cannibalism is exactly what God predicted through Moses when he warned them what would come upon them if they ever abandoned the Lord. All they had to do was go back to the Scriptures, and somebody had to just open up the Hebrew writings that had been handed down and look at this thing and say, this is exactly what God said was going to happen.

I'll show it to you. Actually, it's from the book of Deuteronomy. I'll put it up on the screen for you. This is Moses speaking. He says,

Deuteronomy 28:53 (ESV)

And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you.

And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you.

God told them ahead of time that even the people who would be in better times considered the best mother and father in the world would turn to cannibalism in this time of great distress when they walked away from the Lord.

But instead of taking this to heart, which the king should have done when he saw this horrific thing that was going on, instead of taking it to heart—and he's already wearing sackcloth but he apparently isn't doing it for the right reason—instead of coming to the Lord in humility and saying, God, forgive us because we've walked away from You, look what king Jehoram says; look what goes on in verse 31, in response to this horrific scene, he says,

“May God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today.”

And so, he is so grieved by this situation the only thing he can think to do is just kill Elisha. He just assumes that this is so much the work of the Lord against them.

And Elisha— we're told in verse 32,

“Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. Now the king had dispatched a man from his presence, but before the messenger arrived Elisha said to the elders, “Do you see how this murderer has sent to take off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold the door fast against him. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?”

In other words, Elisha is saying to them, telling them, not to allow the messenger to come in because the king is going to be right behind him, and just wait for the king, he'll be right there.

“³³ And while he was still speaking with them, the messenger came down to him and said, (and this was the message from the king) “This trouble is from the Lord! Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?”

Have you ever asked that question yourself? Have you ever been brought to a place of such despair and hopelessness that you would say. Why should I wait for God any longer? Why should I spend one more minute putting my hope in God? This is a hopeless situation. There's absolutely nothing God is willing to do, and there's no reason to hope in Him. I mean, why should I hope in God? What has He done? You ever had somebody say that to you? What's God ever done for me?

Interesting statement. But Jehoram is at that point – and frankly, it's a point that we can understand.

Verse 1 of chapter 7 says,

“But Elisha said, “Hear the word of the Lord: thus says the Lord, Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.”

In other words, he's telling them that in one day's time, or literally within 24 hours, he's telling them the siege will be lifted and food will be so plentiful; it will sell at a much more normal rate.

“² Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned said to the man of God, “If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?” But he said (and this is Elisha speaking), “You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.”

The captain, by the way, is the voice of doubt and unbelief. But lest we be too hard on this guy, I thought about this when I was looking through these verses, and I thought, I can understand. Can you understand? Can you understand what it's like to have gone through—we don't know how many months of seeing this siege just drag on and on to the point where people are now resorting to cannibalism. They are so desperate and so hungry. You watch people walking around, they're like skin and bones, and there's no hope in sight—at least not with human eyes, physical eyes.

So what happens to us? Eventually, we give up, don't we? Give up hope, and our voice can sound just like the voice of this captain. If God were to open up the windows of heaven, would that even be enough? This is the voice of unbelief. This is the voice of doubt. It's that breaking point – and we get this. We know how life can be so overwhelming at times. But obviously, to say that God cannot rescue—it's one thing to say, it appears that God will not rescue us. I suppose that's a perception that it might be a little bit less intense. But to say God cannot is to express a situation that is now beyond hope and to demonstrate a complete breakdown of faith. That's where this captain had come from.

So you'll notice that the word of Elisha to him was, well, you're going to see it, but you're not going to be able to experience it. And we'll see how that plays out. It's a harsh judgment to be sure, but that's also what happens when doubt takes over in our lives. We may see the blessing of the Lord, but we will not

experience it when we are filled with doubt, when there is nothing but doubt in our lives. Well, that says, I don't think so.

Verse 3,

“Now there were four men who were lepers at the entrance to the gate. And they said to one another, ‘Why are we sitting here until we die?’⁴ If we say, ‘Let us enter the city,’ the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. (In other words, if they find some food in the city, we're going to be the last ones to get it.) And if we sit here... (we're going to die of starvation, anyway). So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Syrians. If they spare our lives we shall live, and if they kill us we shall but die (anyway, so it's no big deal).”

⁵ So they arose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians. But when they came to the edge of the camp of the Syrians, behold, there was no one there. ⁶ For the Lord had made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots and of horses, 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 Egypt to come against us.’⁷ So they fled away in the twilight and abandoned their tents, their horses, and their donkeys, leaving the camp as it was, and fled for their lives.”

Boy, that's the way you want to fight a battle. Let God fight it for you.

“⁸ And when these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank (of course they did; they were starving to death), and they carried off silver and gold and clothing and went and hid them. Then they came back and entered another tent and carried off things from it and went and hid them.”

Then they thought better of it.

“⁹ Then they said to one another, ‘We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come; let us go and tell the king's household.’¹⁰ So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city and told them, ‘We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold, there was no one to be seen or heard there, nothing but the horses tied and the donkeys tied and the tents as they were.’¹¹ Then the gatekeepers called out, and it was told within the king's household.¹² And the king rose in the night and said to his servants, ‘I will 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 open country, thinking,

‘When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive and get into the city.’”

So this is interesting because, remember, the king heard Elisha's prophecy. He heard it not that long ago, and Elisha told him within 24 hours the siege will be over. So you can see he's not believing it. He's still skeptical, and he says, I don't think so. I think they're just waiting. They're going to ambush us. They're just outside the camp.

¹³ And one of his servants said, “Let some men take five of the remaining horses, seeing that those who are left here will fare like the whole multitude of Israel who have already perished. Let us send and see.” In other words, let's just go. If they get ambushed, we're going to all die anyway.

“¹⁴ So they took two horsemen, and the king sent them after the army of the Syrians, saying, “Go and see.” ¹⁵ So they went after them as far as the Jordan, and behold, all the way was littered with garments and equipment that the Syrians had thrown away in their haste. And the messengers returned and told the king.

¹⁶ Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Syrians. So a seah of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.”

It happened just the way God said that it would.

“¹⁷ Now the king had appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate. (That means where people are coming and going.) And the people (obviously were so excited to get out and get some of the food) trampled him in the gate, so that he died, as the man of God had said when the king came down to him. ¹⁸ For when the man of God had said to the king, “Two seahs of barley shall be sold for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour for a shekel, about this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria,” ¹⁹ the captain had answered the man of God, “If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?” And he had said, “You shall see it with your own 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.”

Wow, the result of unbelief. But look what God did in the strangest supernatural way. Look what God did in saving the nation of Israel and what spiritual condition was the nation of Israel in at that time. Yeah, the worst spiritual condition, and God saved them supernaturally.

How do you suppose they started hearing horses and chariots and the sound of a coming army? The Lord opened them up, didn't He, to hear things that weren't there in the physical anyway? Maybe they were being made to hear the spiritual armies of the Lord. Who knows? But they were so frightened by it that they ran for their lives. And God saved His people from this desperate situation.

It's amazing, isn't it? Well, the bottom line here is just don't give up hope. Don't give up hope in the Lord. Oh, that comes out of your mouth so easy though, doesn't it? When you see somebody who's going through a hard time, we might want to come up to him and say, hey, don't give up. Don't give up hope. Don't give up hope. But it sounds like such a trite thing to say at a particular time when life is so hard, so difficult, so challenging, and when somebody's heart has gotten to that place of just hopelessness. It's like, I don't think God cares.

It's probably a good time to take them to this story and say, hey, let's just read the Bible together, shall we? Let's see what God is able to do even in the most desperate of circumstances, just to remind ourselves God is able.