

2 Kings Chapter 7

Verses 1-2: Elisha foretold that food would once again be available as prices stabilized (7:16), but the officer's doubt brought judgment on himself (7:17). The truth of these prophecies is emphasized through repetition (7:18-20).

Windows in heaven" pictures heaven as a storehouse from which God dispenses provisions (Psalm 78:23; Mal. 3:10).

2 Kings 7:1 "Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, Tomorrow 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."

"A measure ... for a shekel": About 7 quarts of flour would see for about two-fifths of an ounce of silver.

Two measures ... for a shekel": About 13 to 14 quarts of barley would also sell for about two-fifths of an ounce of silver. These prices, when compared to those in 6:25, indicated that the next day the famine in Samaria would end.

"In the gate": In ancient Israel, the city gate was the marketplace where business was transacted (Ruth 4:1; 2 Sam. 15:1-5). Normal trade at the city gate of Samaria implied that the siege would be lifted.

Jehoram had felt that all was really lost (6:33). Elisha's words were designed to give the discouraged king new assurance that the Lord was in charge of the whole situation and was ever merciful toward a repentant and obedient heart.

We will see, in this chapter, the deliverance of Samaria out of the hands of Syria. This measure of fine flour would be about a peck and a half of flour. A shekel was 10 penny weights of whatever metal this is speaking of. This would be a drastic change from the inflated price of food, we saw in the last lesson. This would be the price of flour in times of plenty.

2 Kings 7:2 "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."

"A lord on whose hand the king leaned": For lord or "officer" (see note on 9:25). The king depended upon this officer as his chief adviser.

"You shalt see ... but ... not eat": The royal official questioned the Lord's ability to provide food within the day. For that offense against God, Elisha predicted that the officer would witness the promised miracle, but he would not eat any of it. How this prophecy was fulfilled is described (in verses 16-17).

The officer's disbelief would cause him to fail to partake of any of the promised plenty, even though he would live to see it (verses 19-20).

This lord, upon whom the king leaned, was a very close servant. His doubt in what Elisha had said would cause him not to eat of the food. Remember, this is not spoken to the king. The servant was denouncing Elisha and God. It was almost as if he was denying that Manna fell from heaven before.

Verses 3-11: God's grace is available for all. Four "leprous men" were the first to receive His provision (food, clothes, silver, and gold), after He caused the Syrian army to flee their well-stocked "camp." Whether the men feared divine or human punishment, they sensed an obligation to share their "good news." This account foreshadows the ministry of Jesus, who graciously cleansed lepers and preached good news to the poor (Matt. 11:5; Luke 7:22).

Verses 3-4: Lepers were not allowed inside the cities (Lev. 13:46).

2 Kings 7:3 "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?"

"Leprous men": The account of these lepers is used to tell of the siege's end and the provisions for Samaria (verses 3-11).

"At the entering in of the gate": In the area immediately outside the city gate, four lepers lived, shut out of Samaria because of their disease (Lev. 13:46; Num. 5:3). The lepers knew that living in Samaria, whether just outside or inside the gate, offered them nothing but death.

2 Kings 7:4 "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."

Contrary to the law which forbid them.

"Then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there": Not being able to obtain food to preserve life.

"And if we sit here, we die also": Having nothing to eat to support nature.

"Now therefore let us come, and fall unto the host of the Syrians": Put ourselves into their hands, and lie at their mercy.

"If they save us alive, we shall live": If they do not put us to death, but give us bread to eat, our lives will be preserved.

"And if they kill us, we shall but die": Which we must inevitably do, whether we stay here, or go into the city.

The 4 lepers were sitting around waiting to die. They happened to be, just outside the city gate. They knew, if they entered the city, there was nothing but famine there. If they went to the camp of the Syrians, the worst thing that would happen to them would be that they killed them. They were dying anyway, what difference did it make when?

2 Kings 7:5 "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."

"Uttermost part of the camp of Syria": Literally "the edge of the camp". The normal meaning of this phrase would refer to the back edge of the army camp, the farthest point from the wall of Samaria.

They went in the twilight, so no one would see them. To their amazement, when they got into the camp, there was no one there. They had all left during the night.

2 Kings 7:6 "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 Hittites and ... Egyptians': Sometime before the arrival of the lepers, the Lord had made the Syrians hear the terrifying sound of a huge army approaching. They thought the Israelite king had hired two massive foreign armies to attack them. The Hittites were descendants of the once-great Hittite empire who lived in small groups across northern Syria (see note on 1 Kings 10:29). Egypt was in decline at this time, but its army would still have represented a great danger to the Syrians.

These "Hittites" were the Neo-Hittite descendants of that once great Hittite nation in ancient Anatolia (i.e., modern Turkey).

They had heard the chariots alright, but it had been the army of heaven they had heard. They were so frightened, when they heard the noise of the many chariots that they fled for safety. They assumed this was the army of Egypt and the army of the Hittites coming against them.

2 Kings 7:7 "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."

Or in the dark, as the Targum; when the twilight was going off; so that the lepers came very quickly after they were gone (2 Kings 7:5).

"And left their tents, and their horses, and their asses": Such was their fright, that they could not stay to loosen their cattle, with which they might have made greater speed, but ran away on foot: and they left.

"Even the camp as it was": Took nothing away with them, either money or provisions.

"And fled for their life": Which they imagined to be in great danger.

It appears they fled so fast, that they took nothing with them that might slow them down. They left in the middle of the night. They must have run away on foot, because they left their horses and asses.

2 Kings 7:8 "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]."

They had been starving with the people of the city of Samaria. The first thing they did, was eat and drink, until they could hold no more. They took some of the wealth (all they could carry) two different times out of the camp, and hid it for later.

2 Kings 7:9 "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."

"Mischief": The lepers did not fear that the Syrians would return, but that the Lord would punish them for their sin of not telling the Israelite king of their discovery.

Failure to share their good fortune with others would be a sin worthy of judgment against the lepers (Prov. 15:27; 21:17-18; 1 Cor. 10:24). So ought men to share the Good News of the gospel with all (Rom. 10:13-15).

Probably not their honesty, but their fear of being killed caused them to go, and tell the city of the good fortune. Of course, they would report it to the king and his house first.

2 Kings 7:10 "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 chief of those that had the care of the gate of it; for there were more than one, as follows.

"And they told them, saying": The porter, and the watchmen with him.

"We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man": Not one to be seen or heard.

"But horses tied, and asses tied": To their mangers; the latter, as well as the former, were used for war, not only to carry burdens, but to fight upon, as Aelianus relates of some people. And especially when there was a want of horses, as Strabo; and both observe that this creature was sacrificed to Mars.

"And the tents as they were": None of them struck, nor anything taken out of them.

It is strange, that they would have left their horses behind, because they could have travelled faster on their horses. Sometimes people do strange things when they are terribly frightened. The lepers report all of this to the porter, for him to tell the king. The king had no idea, neither did these lepers, why the Syrians had fled.

2 Kings 7:11 "And he called the porters; and they told [it] to the king's house within."

The porter of the city called to the porters of the king's palace.

"And they told it to the king's house within": To some of his domestic servants within the palace, and they reported it to the king.

2 Kings 7:12 "And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now show 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."

"What the Syrians have done to us": Jehoram greeted the report from the lepers with great suspicion. He thought that the Arameans, or Syrians, were feigning the pull back to appear defeated, in order to lure the Israelites out of Samaria for a surprise attack on them to gain entrance into the city. However (verses 13-15), describe how the leper's report was confirmed.

When the porter tells the king, he does not believe that they had fled. He believed they had set a trap to catch them, when they came out to the camp. Undoubtedly, it had slipped his mind, what Elisha had told him.

2 Kings 7:13 "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."

Not having died through the famine as the rest.

"Behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it": Behold, I say, they are even as the multitude of Israel that are consumed. Signifying, there was a like consumption among the horses as among the people, and they that remained were starving as they were. So that should those horses, and the men, fall into the hands of the Syrians, and perish, it would be no great matter. The loss would not be much, since they must perish if they continue in the city. According to the Vulgate Latin version, these five horses were all that were left.

"And let us send and see": Whether the report of the lepers is true or not.

2 Kings 7:14 "They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see."

Not five, but two only, and those the best, that drew in the king's chariot perhaps, and so were better fed, and fitter for this expedition.

"And the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, go and see": Whether they are fled or not.

There were very few horses left in the city. These were kept for emergencies. They were so hungry, there was very little to lose by going to see, if it was true they had fled and left their goods for the taking. The king sent a chariot and men to check this out.

Verses 15-20 (see note on 7:1-2).

2 Kings 7:15 "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."

Not finding them in the camp, and knowing the route they would take to their own land, they went as far as Jordan, over which they must pass.

"And, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels which the Syrians had cast away in their haste": In their fright and flight, such of their clothes as hindered them in running. And their armor, as Josephus seems rightly to understand the word used, these they threw away for quicker dispatch.

"And the messengers returned and told the king": That it was as the lepers said, and what they themselves had seen.

They left so fast, they left articles all along the way. Anything they thought might slow them down in their getaway, they left on the side of the road. It was obvious that something had frightened them so badly, they had fled home as fast as they could go.

Verses 16-20: By repeating words from verses 1-2, and by explicit statements ("according to the word of the Lord" (verse 16); "just as the man of God had said / spoken" (verses 17-18), the text emphasizes that Elisha's prophecy (in 7:2), literally came to pass.

2 Kings 7:16 "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."

Of their riches, and of their provisions; of which there was such a plenty, not only for present use, but for sale.

"So that a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel": Etc., as it was written.

"According to the word of the Lord": Through Elisha (2 Kings 7:1).

The prophet had spoken the truth. You can easily see why the whole town emptied, and ran for what food they could find. They would be like the lepers. They would eat first, then spoil the other things in the camp after.

2 Kings 7:17 "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."

Not to keep out the enemy, of which there was no danger; but to prevent disorders and tumults among the people. And that they might go out in an orderly and regular manner.

"And the people trod upon him in the gate": Being eager to get out for food; and he endeavoring to keep order among them, they pressed upon him, and threw him down, and trampled him under foot. Or he was placed here to regulate the market, which everyone might be supplied in time, but through the people's pressing to get provisions, he was overran, and trod upon.

"And died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him": So that he saw the plenty, but partook not of it, as he said (see 2 Kings 7:2).

The lord, in the verse above, is speaking of the arrogant servant of the king, who laughed at Elisha and at God for saying God would open the windows of heaven and send food to them. He was left to watch the gate, and the stampeding people ran over him, and killed him. He truly would not eat of the food.

2 Kings 7:18 "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 tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria:"

As (in 2 Kings 7:1), and what he said to the king there, and to the lord (in 2 Kings 7:2), are repeated in this and the next verse. That it might be observed how exactly the prophecies were fulfilled.

For the term "man of God" (see the note on 1 Sam. 9:6-11).

2 Kings 7:19 "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."

(As in 2 Kings 7:2).

"And he said": That is, Elisha, as in the same place.

This repeats what Elisha had said to the king and his arrogant servant. This was a reminder to them, and to us, that Elisha truly was a man of God. His words were spoken as an oracle of God. They were God's Words in the mouth of Elisha.

2 Kings 7:20 "And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died."

As the prophet predicted.

"For the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died" (see 2 Kings 7:17).

It is a dangerous thing to speak against God's anointed. This servant found that out, by paying with his life. He saw this with his eyes and had time to regret it. He died, before he ate of the food.

2 Kings Chapter 7 Questions

1. What word of encouragement does Elisha speak to the king of Israel?
2. How much was a measure of fine flour?
3. What does a shekel weigh?
4. Who doubted what Elisha said?
5. What did Elisha say to him?
6. How many leprous men were at the gate of the city?
7. Why did they decide to sneak into the Syrian camp?
8. What did they find?
9. Why had the Syrians left?
10. What had they left behind?
11. What chariots had they really heard?

12. What did the lepers do at first, when they found the Syrians gone?
13. What caused these lepers to go to the city, and tell that the Syrians were gone?
14. Who did they tell?
15. What did the king think, when he heard they were gone?
16. What did one of the servants of the king suggest they do, to find out if they were gone?
17. Who went to check it out?
18. What was strewn along the way?
19. Who went out to the camp to spoil the camp?
20. Where did the servant, that the king had leaned upon, stay?
21. What happened to him?