

AM 2 Kings 6:24-7:20 The Siege Lifted

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[0 : 00] We're going to read in chapter 6 of 2 Kings at verse 24 and I believe that is page 396 in the church Bible.

! 2 Kings chapter 6 and at verse 24 and we're going to read all the way through to the end of chapter 7. Step 7.

Step 10. for five shekels of silver. Now as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him saying, Help my lord, O king.

And he said, If the lord will not help you, how shall I help you? From the threshing floor? From the wine press? 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. 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's hidden her son. Where the king heard the words of the woman.

[1 : 28] He tore his clothes. Now he's passing by on the wall and the people looked and behold, he had sackcloth beneath his body, on his body. And he said, May God do to me, do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha, son of Shaphat, remains on his shoulders today.

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. It's not the sound of his master's feet behind him. And while he was still speaking with them, the messenger came down to him and said, This trouble is from the Lord.

Why should I wait for the Lord any longer? But Elisha said, Hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord, Tomorrow about this time, a sea of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel and two seas of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria.

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, You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.

[2 : 55] 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? If we say, Let us enter the city, the famine's in the city, and we shall die there.

And if we sit here, we die also. So come, 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. 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.

For the Lord had made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots and 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.

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. And when these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank and carried off silver and gold and clothing and went and hid them.

[4 : 01] And they came back and entered another tent and carried off things from it and went and hid them. And then they said to one another, We're 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. 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. Then the gatekeepers called out and it was told within the king's household and the king rose in the night and said to his servants, I'll tell you what the Syrians have done to us.

They know 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. And one of his servants said, Let some men take five of the remaining horses, seeing that those who are left here will fear like the whole multitude of Israel who have already perished.

Let us send and see. So they took two horsemen and the king sent them after the army of the Syrians saying, Go and see. 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.

[5 : 24] And the messengers returned and told the king. Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Syrians. So a sea of fine flour was sold for a shekel and two seas of barley for a shekel according to the word of the Lord.

Now the king had appointed the captain on whose hand he had leaned to have charge of the gate and the people trampled him in the gate so that he died.

As the man of God had said when the king came down to him, for when the man of God had said to the king, Two seas of barley shall be sold for a shekel and a sea of fine flour for a shekel about this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria.

The captain had answered the man of God, If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could such a thing be? And he said, You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.

And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate and he died. Amen. This is God's word.

[6 : 31] If you have your Bible with you, please turn back to 2 Kings and we're going to look at the whole of this account of what happened during the siege of Samaria.

Now, perhaps some of you already might know this, but it does no harm to be reminded of it, that it's impossible if you're familiar with the life of Christ not to notice some really, really striking similarities between the life of Christ and the life of Elisha, this prophet that we're reading about here.

In the life of Elisha, we read of the dead being raised. We read of, for example, just earlier, chapter 2 before, there's the Shunammite's son and her son is raised to life again.

We read of people being cleansed of leprosy, for example, Naaman. And just earlier in chapter 6, we see the blind receiving again their sight.

and most striking of all for me, there's an example of a great crowd who are fed with just a few loaves of barley bread.

[7 : 57] And in all of these things we see these great parallels with Jesus. In fact, in chapter 13 of 2 Kings, we read of an example where even after his death, a man is thrown in an emergency situation into Elisha's tomb and when he touches Elisha's bones, he comes back to life.

And I'm sure there's a sermon there waiting to be preached. but surely we can see that Elisha's life here is like a great big Old Testament signpost pointing us in so many different ways to the work of Christ.

And it's with that in mind that I want us to consider together this passage that we read because it's here that we see Elisha as a prophet proclaiming God's word in a situation where there seems to be no hope.

It seems like an impossible situation. There's no realistic chance of deliverance humanly speaking for the city of Samaria under siege and yet Elisha comes as a prophet of the Lord and brings God's word and says that there will be deliverance.

So let's turn then to look at these and we'll look at it under a number of headings. Firstly the desperateness of the situation that the Sumerian city found itself in.

[9 : 45] Then we'll look at the unlikely word of the Lord and lastly we'll consider the danger of unbelief. And it's my prayer that as we work through these together that we'll see that these events have an enduring application for us today.

Well firstly the desperately desperateness of this situation that the city in Samaria found itself in.

These are really miserable and horrible conditions. Christians. I don't want to dwell on how bad it was. Reading about them was bad enough was it not?

Shockingly these people have come to a complete end of their own resources. They have nothing in the city and because they've come to an end of their own resources they have quite literally begun to devour one another beginning with the most weak and vulnerable.

It's hard to imagine a worse set of circumstances and yet even as we read these circumstances we can see that not everybody's situation was exactly the same.

[11 : 12] Some people in the city had enough money to trade what wealth they had for what little food remained in the city 80 shekels for a donkey's head and some pretty disgusting sounding items are being traded as either food or perhaps fuel.

And now that we've read the whole chapter we know that actually although there were these differences and some people had some money and some people didn't have any money the fact that there were differences between these people was about to become completely irrelevant.

They were all trapped within the city wall they were all under siege and yes there were some differences in their circumstances but ultimately they had no hope of deliverance and this of course in a sense is a picture of our situation.

There are differences between my situation and your situation I don't know your situation and certainly in this town today and in the surrounding area there will be some people who every day are pained by the guilt of some sin they've committed and feel that painfully and there will be other people who are quite certain that they are a force for good and and do indeed do good things and yet we notice as in this siege that when people are put under pressure this altruism this love for one another seems to vanish doesn't it?

just like the pact that these two women made in chapter six and I'm tempted to wonder if on the last day even those who seemed like very good people perhaps there will be a rush of accusations to point out the sins of others in a desperate attempt to make a person seem less sinful than someone else and yet it won't make any difference will it?

[13 : 29] Just as all of these people were within the city wall in Samaria so we as pilgrim's progress famously expresses it we are all the citizens of the city of destruction we're under siege in that sense because there's no escape for us having to give an account for our lives and our lives are lives of sin whether it's a little bit of sin or a lot of sin or one big sin or many flagrant sins our lives are lives of sin and so if I could draw one parallel from this situation and this account that we're reading in chapter six and seven it would be the parallel with our own individual accountability because that's what the preaching of the gospel I believe is principally to focus on if you can hold that thought for a minute

I also want us to flip perspective just briefly to think about the perspective of the church as well because this also could be applied in a different way to the situation the church finds itself in the church is under siege under attack and sometimes God's people are brought to such a low point that it seems that there's no hope for the future of the church and so that in a sense is also part of what's happening here I want to share with you something that I read recently it's from an old writer called John Owen he says this about the church picture the church under siege in Samaria it's an exposition of a verse in Philippians chapter 4 which says the Lord is at hand do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be known to

God I'm just going to read this comment that he makes on this verse he says the house of God which seems so often to be near to destruction is yet preserved from ruin often it's brought into a condition that all look on and say now it's gone forever but still it recovers and gets up again the Lord Christ looks on all the while he knows how far things may proceed as a trial when it comes to pass that if pressures and troubles should continue the house will be overborn indeed then he puts in rebukes the wind and waves and makes all things still again a father who looks upon his child in a difficult and dangerous business knows that he can relieve them when he pleases but would willingly see them try their strength and cunning he leaves them alone until perhaps the child thinks himself is quite lost and wonders why their father does not help them but when the condition comes to be such that without help they would be lost indeed instantly the father puts in his hand and saves them so deals the Lord

Jesus with his house he often lets it strive and wrestle with great oppositions to draw out and exercise all the graces of it but yet all this while he looks on and when danger is near indeed he's not far off I found that helpful so as individuals and as congregations of the church of Christ our situation can sometimes seem desperate and you might say hopeless and it's into exactly that situation that God's word comes and that's our next point the unlikely word of the Lord because Elisha in his role as prophet brings this word from the Lord to this situation and it seems almost impossible to believe doesn't it he says that about this time tomorrow provisions of food will be so plentiful that the impact of this siege is going to be just a memory prices will be back to normal and cheap and we see here that this captain says if the

Lord himself should make windows in heaven for the captain this word from the Lord seems so unlikely it requires faith and he does not have that faith to believe it one of the main things I want to draw out from this is for us to notice that this word that comes from the Lord does not require the people to do anything there's no set of instructions given to the people for them to follow through on they don't have to march around the walls a set number of times they don't have to dip in the Jordan a particular number of times there was no instruction accompanying this word from the Lord they just had to believe it to have faith well perhaps if you've heard the gospel message being preached before you can see where I'm going with this and I pray that if you have heard this message before but have not yet laid hold of it by faith that today would be the day that you accept the word of the

[19 : 16] Lord for you because these poor folk in Samaria under siege are an exact parallel to the situation that you and I are in because perhaps you have some moral advantage over me maybe you've committed fewer sins maybe your sins are less serious than mine but you cannot yourself lift a finger to erase or cancel out that sin because sin is not like that we cannot atone for it ourselves I'm not sure whether to give this illustration or not but the problem with sin is that the standard that's required is perfection the analogy would be imagine you're going for an operation you're very unwell and somebody comes with the scalpels for the surgeon and says

I've got these scalpels to perform this operation but unfortunately on the way here they fell in the toilet and some of them are pretty disgusting and some of them are nearly clean doesn't matter does it none of them are suitable and that's what sin does to us it makes us completely unsuitable for heaven but the glory of the gospel and the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ is that he is able and willing to provide a perfect life on our behalf if you've got one of the notice sheets you'll see on the back of that Romans 25-26 have a look at these verses Jesus achieves that deliverance on our behalf and like the Sumerians we don't actually do anything in that sense we're called to repent but principally we're called to put our faith in the Lord

Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and perhaps just like the word of the Lord here it seems too good to be true but we are called to believe the promises that are given to us in God's word and so it applies to us as individuals but as I've also been saying there's this parallel application to our experience as a church because there's an interesting connection with the words that this captain uses about what would happen he talks about the Lord making windows in heaven and it's an unusual turn of phrase the first place we find that is in the days of Noah where the Lord opens the floodgates or windows of heaven and the emphasis there for our purposes is the overwhelming quantity of water that can be provided from this source but more likely the captain was familiar with the words of psalm 78 and verses 23 and 24 the windows of heaven are spoken there of being open for the

Lord raining down manna from heaven to feed his people as he had done in the desert but as I say I want to think about how this might apply to the church and there's another place where the windows of heaven are mentioned in the Bible and that's jumping forward in time to Malachi chapter 3 in verse 10 there God says himself bring the full tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house and thereby put me to the test says the Lord of hosts if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down blessing until there is no more need there's a few parallels between that prophecy in Malachi and the chapter that we're reading just now the people in Malachi had been saying it's vain to serve the Lord just as the king of

Samaria had been saying similar things and yet in Malachi there's this promise of revival if we will only turn once again to the Lord and the church in Scotland without question is at a low ebb and maybe every generation feels this way but surely if we were to look at the whole of church history from the reformation until now was there ever a time when there was a greater need for sincere Christians to live out their lives by God's word taking seriously and being those who tremble at God's word to strive to lead holy and righteous and God honouring lives and yet if we're honest do we not fear as it says in Revelation that the candlestick is being removed from Scotland as a presbytery and as a denomination we seem to lurch from one fresh emergency to another our supply of preachers is drying up we're in a crisis in that sense and yet

[25 : 00] God's word to these folks in Samaria was about this time tomorrow and his word in Malachi is in a sense a promise of revival he says test me in this reform our ways and let us commit ourselves with a new earnestness to seek the Lord and it may indeed be that we'll be brought through a time of testing to see blessing being poured down until there is no more need because God has promised in his word that the church will be built and that we will see it presented as a perfect bride on that last day so let us fix our eyes on that glorious hope which is a sure and certain hope promised to us in God's word but in closing I must follow where our chapter follows and it would be nice to end on a note of deliverance and a note of fulfilment of God's word but this chapter ends with a very solemn solemn warning about the danger of unbelief and as we've been having these two kind of parallel applications all the way through haven't we we can see that perhaps that would apply within the church blessing may be withheld from our church because of our own self-reliance or our own self-righteousness our lack of faith ultimately but just as it applied to an individual here

I want us to think principally when we think of the danger of unbelief about the danger of unbelief for us as individuals because there cannot be anything so more solemn than this can there be when we read the Old Testament sometimes the judgments in it seem harsh don't they they seem well you think perhaps that could have been me perhaps I wouldn't have had faith to believe in that set of circumstances where there seemed to be no way of fulfilling that word from the Lord perhaps I would have had a similar reaction and I think that's what we're meant to think these are real events this is a real account a real person this really happened and it's there for us as a warning no word from the Lord will ever fail and you are here if I may press my point hearing

God's word this morning and you have it in your hand and when we hear what's been offered in the gospel just like this captain if your heart is not ready to receive it you'll reject it you'll say that you don't understand it you'll say that it cannot be true Samaria needed saved from this siege but we need deliverance from our sin and in both cases all that we're asked to do is to trust the word of the Lord some people might say that they want to contribute something to their own salvation they want to be someone who does something because they don't realise how serious their sins are and there are other people for me even more tragic there are some people who think that their own sins are too serious to be forgiven the Bible makes clear that there are some sins that are worse than others

I'll never tire of quoting these words from our confession of faith which says as there is no sin so small but it deserves damnation so there is no sin so great that it can bring damnation on those who truly repent and against this scale of sins where some are serious and some less serious there's one sin that stands tall and mighty above all the others in the being the most serious sin of all and that sin is to reject the son to reject the Lord Jesus Christ is the most serious sin of all and to persist in rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ is an unforgivable sin to understand why we need to think about the value of the gift rejected consider for a moment if you were unwell gravely unwell and I offer you a cup of water to make you feel better and you reject it because I don't want that you say well it didn't cost me much to give you that cup of water

I can cope with that consider if you are gravely unwell and what you need is a kidney transplant and I'm a match and I cut out my own kidney and offer it to you and you say I don't want it no friendship could sustain a rejection of a gift so valuable in rejecting the son we reject something infinitely more valuable than my kidney to reject the Lord Jesus Christ who as Galatians 1 4 says gave himself for our sins is without any exception the most serious of all sins sins if you're not a Christian this morning do not reject the son any longer believe the word of the

[31 : 33] Lord put your trust in the only one who's able to deliver you the only name given under heaven by which we must be saved amen may God bless these thoughts to