

Kings and Prophets 14-04-25b

We pick up our study in 2nd Kings chapter 6. We've seen the Syrian army come down and surround the town of Dothan. Unbeknownst to them, they are surrounded. They don't know it.

There's only two people who do know it. This is Elisha, and for purposes of instruction, I'm just going to call him Gehazi from now on, because as far as I'm concerned, that's who it is. If you want to think differently, just be quiet, because it's Gehazi.

So Gehazi is the other one who sees this. Now, pay close attention to the prayer of the prophet. What would you think if somebody sent a whole army after you, and you had the God-given power to obliterate them? I'm thinking of a prophet where a contingent was sent to take him and bring him to the king in not completely unlike circumstances.

The king is put out with the prophet, says, go get the prophet, and when the guys go to get the prophet, what happened? Fifty guys evaporated. King sends another fifty guys and their commander. It's important to include the commander.

So there's fifty-one guys evaporated. The second group, fifty-one guys evaporated. The third group of fifty with their commander comes, and the commander says, which prophet? Elijah with a J, right? These are the days of the fire hitting.

Who is the prophet on top of Mount Carmel? Elijah with a J. What happened to the dissenting prophets? Mass slaughter. This is Elisha with a sheen. This is Elisha with an SH.

And he has how much of the spirit of Elijah? Half? Did you say half? Oh, you said twice. Twice the power. Twice the spirit, a double portion of the spirit.

So I'm expecting dual lightning bolts to come down. I'm expecting entire vast fiery armies to come down and incinerate these guys, right? Because he's like Elijah squared, right? And so what happens? Elisha has purposely showed Gehazi and us what is available. This is what is available.

This is what is on call. Who are they surrounding? Who are they there for? Joshua, for crying out loud, only met the general. Did Joshua ever see the vast armies of the Lord? It doesn't say that he did.

He met the commander of the armies of the Lord, right? This is something new. This is something special. And so Elisha says, well, thank you, Lord, for letting me know that I've got this vast contingent.

And now that the army is threatening me, put them into action. No. When they, notice it says the Syrians in italics.

When they came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, strike this people, I pray, with

blindness. And he struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. Now Elisha said to them, this is not the way, nor is this the city.

Follow me and I will bring you to the man whom you seek. He is the man whom they seek, right? So, is he telling the truth? That lying prophet Elisha. He is the man.

However, looked at in a certain light, he's going to take them to the city they need to see. He's going to take them the way they need to go. And his identity, which is currently veiled, will be revealed at the right time.

So he's basically putting them off with what you can charitably call sort of a sleight of hand. You know, a good sleight of hand magician is a master of directing your attention where he wants your attention. So that things can take place, which might actually be visible, but you're not looking.

You're blind to the subterfuge. You're blind to the machination that brings about the desired effect because you're looking elsewhere. And Elisha directs their attention.

He says, I will help you get where you need to be. Go the way you need to go and find the man you need to find. Follow me.

And they do. They are going to find themselves in the presence of Elisha shortly. But it is on a ground and at a time of Elisha's choosing under the inspiration and direction of God.

But the enemy doesn't get to choose the time. They don't get to choose the place. And they don't get to choose the person.

God will reveal what God is going to reveal in God's good time. Much as took place at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We recently celebrated resurrection weekend.

And the Lord Jesus was revealed at times and places of his own choosing. You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. Other times Jesus says, I'm going to a place where you cannot come.

But I will come to you. You can't come with me. I will come to you.

Our meeting with God is always on God's terms. Always. It is the most frustrating thing to those who reject God.

And they are really not unbelievers so much as unaccepters. This is my new mental term for what we call the unsaved. They are not unbelievers.

They are unaccepters. Belief implies, well, if I had enough evidence, I would believe. They do have enough evidence.

They have seen the evidence and they have rejected the truth that that evidence reveals. They

dislike that truth. What may be known of God is manifest to them.

They suppress the truth that has been revealed. What may be known of God is manifest in creation. The handiwork of God is eternal power and Godhood.

They are without excuse. It isn't a matter of, well, you just didn't give me enough evidence. No.

There is no sufficient evidence to convert them from an unacceptor to an acceptor. It's not a matter of evidence. It is a matter of acceptance or rejection.

But these individuals, that's not really the issue. Here, it is a matter of what is visible and what is not visible. And this is a theme that runs through this whole story.

What do you see and what do you not see? Elisha sees something that Gehazi does not see until Elisha prays and says, God, open his eyes. This whole thing is all about eyes. We have three different instances where vision changes.

In the first prayer, verse 17, Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see. In verse 18, Lord, I pray, strike this people with blindness so that they may not see. And they don't.

The specific thing that they would like to see, they can't see right then. But obviously, they're not all tapping with sticks trying to get to Samaria. They've got a 12-mile hike to go down to Samaria.

An army, you say, maybe a group this size, maybe they're moving three or four miles an hour. So this is a three or four-hour hike. And they're not every one of them just blind as bats stumbling over rocks and things.

They can see everything else fine. They just can't see where they are and who they're dealing with. So, he struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

Elisha says, this is not the way, follow me. I'll bring you to the man you seek. He led them to Samaria.

So it was, verse 20, when they had come to Samaria, Elisha said, Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw, and there they were inside Samaria. They didn't realize they were in Samaria until their eyes were opened.

Now they realize. And it just, hey, wait a minute. This is Samaria.

We thought we were going to Dothan. But when we were in Dothan, we didn't recognize it as Dothan. We were in Samaria and didn't recognize it as Samaria.

Now we do. When the king of Israel, this is Joram, saw them, he said to Elisha, My father, shall I kill? Shall I kill? Them is implied here. But most of the commentaries describe Joram at this point

as a bit hysterical.

He's got this huge army that has marched into the middle of his city peacefully, and they're just kind of looking around in a daze. And he says to Elisha, well, did you bring me here for me to slaughter them like Elijah did the prophets down by the brook? And what does Elisha say? You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? No.

You didn't take these with your sword and your bow. You don't have the right of fate determination on these men. You didn't take them as spoils.

They're not prisoners of war. They have been brought to you, and what does that make them? Guests. The laws of hospitality, treatment of strangers, apply to these men because they have been brought in peacefully.

He says you wouldn't even kill them if they were prisoners of war. You would do other things. You might trade them.

You might use them as leverage. You might do a lot of things. You wouldn't just wholesale slaughter them.

Set food and water before them that they may eat and drink and go to their master. There under your roof, treat them as guests and send them home. Well, the great thing about the laws of hospitality in the ancient Near East and even down to the present is, but especially in those days, it's reciprocal.

If somebody sits you down and feeds you and sends you peacefully on your way, you are obligated now to reciprocate, which means you can't very well about-face and mount an attack. These guys, all of them, have to go home because they have been treated as guests. And it's a very elegant piece of strategy.

Elisha knows that because they have been well treated, these guys cannot return an attack anytime soon. You literally don't bite the hand that feeds you in the ancient Near East. And the Syrians would become the pariah of the entire region if they were to turn around and attack somebody that had just so handsomely treated them.

And they're not only grateful at having their lives spared when they could have easily been slaughtered, but they've been well treated. So he prepared a great feast for them and, give Joram credit, he follows the instructions of the man of God to the letter. And because of this, they went to their master and the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel.

This small act of obedience on the part of the king secures peace. The bands of raiders come no more. God has stationed Elisha in the northern kingdom to woo them back to himself, to demonstrate his power, his compassion.

It is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And much as he treated the people in Nineveh, decreed destruction for them, had the power to destroy them through the prophet Jonah, more about him shortly, but when they repented just of their evil acts, they didn't all become God-fearing believers, they didn't set up an altar to Yahweh in the middle of Nineveh, they just stopped being so evil. And God spared their lives.

He said, you're no longer in the category that must be destroyed immediately. You've mended your ways. You are less of a cancer, less of a threat, less of a malignancy in the area.

Because you have turned, I will spare you, and I will use you as an object lesson for my Yonah people, my dove, unpredictable people. And the book of Jonah wasn't written to Nineveh, the book of Jonah is written to Israel to show them the mercy of God. This really, as much as it is an act of mercy for the Syrians, it is an object lesson for the northern kingdom, for Jehoram himself.

God is ready to deliver. God will save. Look at your small act of obedience, and you are free.

You didn't have to fight a battle. You don't have to keep watching the valleys to see the next place these guys are going to come in and attack. The smallest amount of turning God honors, and He is using example to draw them.

They have seen the mercy of God. They have seen the power of God. Their eyes are open, and they are accountable for what they see.

Gehazi's eyes were open. He sees the power of God ranged on the hillside. Gehazi is accountable for that now.

The Syrians, their eyes are closed, and there is a time when they cannot see. But at the right time, and at the right place, and under the right circumstances, their eyes are open by the power of God, and they see. They draw a conclusion.

They learn something. They go back to the land of Syria, and the Syrian king, Ben-Hadad, and his leadership up there say, you know what? Israel is not to be messed with. The man of God down there, the presence of God down there, we need to keep a distance.

Let's go find somebody else to mess with, not them. Because their eyes were open, and they draw a good, valid, life-preserving conclusion. What do you think would have happened if the Syrians had turned around and tried to attack again? You probably would have seen the fiery chariots and horsemen come into action, and they would have been wiped out.

But they respond to what they see, and the Syrians themselves are an example to Israel. Even the godless Arameans up there, godless in the sense of capital G, godless, know enough to respect the power of God and act accordingly. He's our God.

We have a covenant with Him. Why don't we do that? You see the way God is trying every

means possible to reach His people. He is a God of mercy, and these are the days of Elisha.

It is an appeal. But part of the appeal is, there is blindness, and then there is restoration of sight. And there is no more powerful testimony to what Paul talks about in Romans when he says, Blindness has happened in part to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles come in.

And the chastening in the example is going to be used to open their eyes, and they will say at their resurrection, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And that's the beginning of the millennial kingdom. And those who get that lesson, who avail themselves of their freshly opened eyes, are going to be those who dwell in the land, who pass under the rod, who experience the blessings of inheritance.

Observe, interpret, apply. Nation of Israel in the Old Testament, individual believer now. We see these things in Scripture, and we think, isn't that a spectacular thing that we see? The way that God works, the power that He has, the elegance of the account, and the way that God weaves it together.

But all of that is meaningless if our eyes are opened, and then we pull a Gehazi and decide we're going to run after Naaman and get a couple of bars of silver and a few changes of clothes, and end up leprous for life and infecting our families as he did. Northern Israel will not remember this lesson for long. This is circa 850, I think.

I've got it written down here. 843. This is circa 850 B.C. So, 850, 840, this ten year period, Hazael is going to become king.

He's going to murder his master and become king in 843. And that's 120 years before 721 when the northern kingdom is taken out by the Assyrians. So, my spirit will not strive with men, nevertheless his days will be 120 years.

Well, the 120 year clock is about to start in the days of Elisha, and will run, and because the northern kingdom does not learn, does not respond, and does not turn, they are going to lose their inheritance in the land. And they will not recover it until the millennium. Not until the millennium.

Will that land be restored to the people of God? And not these people, those who by faith and patience inherit the promise, will dwell again in the land, and the rest of them will be outside. Cut into a portion their lot, their inheritance, with the hypocrites. That is an example for us.

It is so important for us not simply to see, but to act on what we see. Our eyes are open. What does Paul say in Ephesians chapter 1? The eyes of your heart, the eyes of your understanding, having been enlightened, so that you may come to know.

This theme of amazing grace, I once was blind, but now I see. Well, that is good, but what do we do with what we see? What do we do with what we learn? Does it make a difference? Does it motivate us to genuine change? Genuine faith? Genuine obedience that is consistent, that is

habitual, that characterizes us? I was pointing out to somebody earlier in the week that it's one thing to tell a falsehood. It is something else to habitually prevaricate, to habitually deceive, to be a liar.

Telling one lie does not make you a liar. Habitual lie telling makes you a liar. Falling in your judgment and spreading a piece of gossip doesn't make one a gossip.

But if you habitually tell things out of school, that makes you that thing. And there is a fallenness that causes us to trip and stumble and fall in various areas at various times. But what is the pattern? What is the prevailing climate in our lives? Is it diligence? Is it faith? Do we use the eyes that God has opened or not? Gehazi has his eyes open and he sees here.

But he is eventually going to trade away what he has seen. The Syrians don't see. When they do see, they go home and say, don't mess with the northern kingdom of Israel anymore.

And the people up there are apparently convinced. When this story is spread around, and you get the idea, could this have been a second witness when Naaman hears this Jewish girl and he feels comfortable going down to the land of grace, to the land of hospitality, to the land where he is not worried about being driven away or having the guard called and seeing it as a scouting mission or an incursion. Why is Naaman comfortable coming to Dothan to visit Elisha, to this very same town that this army came to? Was Naaman in that previous contingent? Is that how he knows the road to Dothan? We don't know.

But I think the Naaman episode is after. And this back and forth between peace and lack of incursion and then fresh hostilities and fresh encroachments has less to do with the Syrians and their plans and purposes and more to do with the people in Israel. What is their heart and what is their attitude toward God? They briefly have a response of faith and obedience but they can't sustain it.

Joram does the right thing here. He does everything Elisha tells him to. Elisha says don't kill the men.

He doesn't kill them. He says feed them. He builds them an enormous feast.

And for that he is immediately blessed. It's stimulus response. There is reward for that good behavior.

And you would think he would learn but he doesn't. And he is going to be murdered eventually because he cannot sustain what he sees. The Syrians are better at remembering what they have seen than either Gehazi or the king.

Gehazi, the one who has seen. We are the ones who have seen. What are we going to do with what God shows us? It's got to make a difference.

If it doesn't, we are going to follow in the path of all of these who saw. But it's like the Israelites

who saw the promises of God for 40 years. Remember in Hebrews, first few chapters? They saw God's grace and God's supernatural provision for 40 years but the promises of God were not mixed with faith in those who heard, in those who saw.

They were all under the blood of the Passover lamb. They were all baptized with Moses in the sea. But with whom was he put out for 40 years? Those who couldn't sustain their faith and obedience after what they had seen and what they had heard.

We don't want to be that nation as individuals in this age. We want to learn from this example and go vow and not do likewise. We want to do better.

We are not of those who draw back unto perdition but those who by faith and patience inherit the promises. So as interesting as these accounts are, the reason they are put here is for our instruction. And it only matters if we benefit from it, if we are schooled by it, if we are chastened, if we are rebuked, corrected and instructed by it.

And it makes a difference. So that's our motivation, that's our encouragement, that's our exhortation in the days that remain to us in this life, certainly in the days immediately ahead, to try to be those who have seen and are changed by what they see. Those two men on the road to Emmaus, when their eyes were opened, as Jesus broke the bread, as Jesus did what? Broke the bread.

The bread is the word. The bread is the body of Christ. This is my body which is broken for you.

Take, eat. Our eyes have been opened and it is our opportunity to be transformed by the renewing of our minds in that way. Well, we'll pick up here in an even more interesting encounter with the Syrians beginning in verse 24 next time.

This is really going to get interesting. If you want a little homework assignment, dove droppings. Research dove droppings.

Fascinating subject. I saw a little deal somewhere where somebody said they were having to live on, forgive the expression, but it was dove poop soup. That's what they were reduced to living on in the city.

So there's more to that than meets the eye. You can research that on your own. We'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the just unbelievable opportunity that You have set before us, the potential that You have given us by investing in us Your Spirit and Your Word, placing us in Christ and making available to us all of these provisions. We are incredibly privileged, we are incredibly blessed, and we have such unspeakably great opportunities.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will keep us ever mindful of what we have been given and

what we can do through the power that You have working within us to will and to do for Your good pleasure. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.