

Kings and Prophets 14-05-16b

We pick up our study now, we're in 2 Kings, and we are looking at chapter 5. Now, Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master. He was a mighty man of valor, a leper. Oh, oops, we're actually in chapter 7, aren't we? We're in verse 3. Now, there were four leprous men at the gates.

Not an accident. Of all of the possible maladies these guys could have, it's not an accident that they are lepers. Is there anybody in this vicinity, during this time, in this city, that doesn't know the story of Naaman the Syrian? Of course they do.

In the story of Naaman the Syrian, a little pop quiz question for you here. How many lepers are there in the story of Naaman the Syrian? Wrong. There are two.

Naaman starts out being a leper and ends up not being a leper. Gehazi starts out not being a leper. See, caught you.

That's right. Yeah, there are two lepers in that story. Here, and Elisha is what kind of prophet? What kind of portion of the spirit does he have? So, there's four lepers now, instead of two.

You still got Syrians involved. You know, it's just one of these things where God puts enough of a connection in there to give us a clue and help us understand what's really going on. You've heard me say this probably many times, but Moby Dick is not just a story about a whale, is it? If you've ever read Melville, yes, there's Captain Ahab.

Yes, there is a big mammal in the water. But the story is not really about the whale, is it? There's something bigger going on. Yeah, I know.

A lot of people think, I thought Moby Dick was a story about a whale. No, you've got to read it. It's metaphorical.

There's commentary on human nature. It's a psychological documentary of Captain Ahab. And it speaks to larger things.

Same thing here. This is not just a story about some lepers. This is not just a story about a king in a long ago time in the last throes of resistance of a siege.

These things are written for us. There's a reason it's here. This is true of every episode, every page of the Bible.

It's not just there to tell a story. It's not just there to record some history. I was looking at some verses actually hanging on the wall.

I was eating my lunch today alone in the work room because Kenny was away doing some non-essential things like selling his house. And so I was in the work room by myself. On the wall we

have a page of the first edition 1611 King James Bible.

You know how they get these pages and they frame them. This particular page is from the book of Numbers. And it is God telling Israel through Moses, this will be the borders of the land.

And it says, actually in the old King James it says, your coasts will be. The word coast means border. And it talks about the Sea of Chinnereth which is the Sea of Galilee.

It talks about the Jordan River. It talks about going down and gives a string of cities over. Your western border will be the great sea, the Mediterranean Sea.

While I was sitting there eating my ribeye blue cheese, looking at that page, and I was thinking about what I just mentioned, that all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. And I'm looking at those verses. Your borders will be as thou goest east from this and to that, from this town to that town, to the great sea, and come back across and be over, and it would be the Jordan, it would be the Sea of Chinnereth.

And I thought, you know, we really need to do that part of Numbers one of these days. Because I have no idea what it's good for. I have not got the first clue why you and I need to know that God said this little, none of these towns do they even know where they are anymore.

They have to guess where they are. They know where the Sea of Galilee is, and they know where the Mediterranean Sea is, right? And they know where the Jordan is, but all of those little intermediate towns, they're long gone. They've been gone for thousands of years.

Just gone. Nobody knows where they are. This is 3,400 years ago these towns existed, and they can't find any of them.

God put it in His Word. Why? Well, as we have seen, whether it's the genealogies, whether it's this story here, there's always a reason why it is there. It's a reason for you and me.

So, one of these days we're going, when you find me saying, turn in your Bible to the book of Numbers, you'll know that I've finally got some sort of a clue as to why that is there, and what it means for us. Obviously, it was useful to the Israelites when they went in. They said, well, we go this far and no farther.

When we drive the people out, we've got to drive them this far. And you can make some general assumptions from that, but there's something going on in that passage. And the more I looked at it, the more I thought, where's my Hebrew text? I need to find out, what do these names mean? Why are they given in this order? Why did God stop their borders here, where later on in the Millennial Kingdom, it's a much bigger patch of ground.

Why? But there's a reason. There's a reason here, and we want to find that, and we want to profit by it. We want to be motivated by it.

We want to make use of it, and accomplish the purpose for which God has given it to us tonight. So, we start back in chapter 7, verse 3. Now. This is the wow consecutive that you have in Hebrew.

It just says, you can translate it, and, now, then. It's just a little piece of glue to connect the narrative together. Well, now, this is, having delivered the prophecy through the door, that story ends.

The camera fades to black on that episode. King never comes in. Little head-taking number three, never gets in.

We close that scene with Elisha calmly sitting at the table with some of these other elders of Israel. His door is still shut. The gate is still shut.

Windows of heaven are still shut. And, now, number three's mouth is shut, because Elisha has sort of sobered him with a prediction. You're going to see it, but you're not going to enjoy it.

You will not partake. And, this, basically, is a prediction of his death. And, so, this guy, instead of taking Elisha's head, Elisha has, basically, taken his head, in the sense that his head is now otherwise occupied with this prophecy.

Now, verse three. New scene. A movie director, you know, like this Noah movie and these others, they don't really have to go make stuff up.

If they would just follow the directorial cues in the word of God, it would make a great movie. It tells you when to fade out. It tells you when to zoom in.

And, by the way, when you think about the history of the northern kingdom, you've got this king. He lived this many years. He did this, that, and the other.

Are not the rest of his acts recorded in the book of the wars of the Lord, or the book of Jasher, or whatever it is? And, he grew old, and he died. And, his son, so and so, took his place. Big picture, zoom out.

Here's a king. A little bit of details. And, he died.

This king took his place, reigned so many years. Did this, that, and the other. Are not the rest of his acts recorded in the book of this, that, and the other? And, he died.

Here, look at the detail. We're getting guys standing outside of doors, exchanging words, in very close-up detail. And, I ask myself, why? Why this level of detail? Did you notice that this deal with the Syrians and Samaria is now occupied two whole chapters? Syrians coming down, Elisha dealing with them, taking them to Samaria, feeding them bread, sending them home.

Ben-Hadad coming back down, besieging the city. These women. And, you know, two women.

Nobody knows their names. But, we have the details of the conversation. The very words that they spoke.

People have wished for some sort of recording device where they could go back in time and try to recapture history that took place. I told you about these people that had the insane idea that pottery that was thrown in the time of Christ might have somehow, as they were putting a whisk broom on it, the whisk broom might have vibrated with the voice of Jesus. And, it would be like a recording.

And, they actually took a recording needle, spun this vase, tried to play the grooves of the vase. Seriously? You know, and they said, you know, I think I hear something. Well, this is much better.

The fidelity here is excellent. We know exactly what these people said, to whom they said it, where they said it. And, there's a reason for it.

There's a reason we have this close-up. There's a reason we have this high-definition episode. God purposed this thing for every generation of believers to profit from since.

And, it has come down to us, and it's here for us. So, what does it mean? What does it say? Well, these four lepers, four leprous men, as opposed to the two leprous men we had in an immediately preceding context, now there are four, because these are the days of Elisha, and stuff keeps doubling. By the way, so what? Why do we care that it doubles? What does it foreshadow? This is, anytime you see stuff related to Elisha, in the Old Testament, or in the New, think, Lord Jesus Christ, preparatory for the church age.

We are the double portion age. God's people, in the Old Testament, are the single portion people. Now, they're going to catch up.

It's not like unfair. It's not politically incorrect. There are actually people who think that it's anti-Semitic to note that God dealt with Israel as a single portion people, and He deals with us as double portion people.

That they were the earthly people, and we are the heavenly people. Their inheritance and their heritage and their future kingdom is on earth. Our heritage and inheritance and future kingdom is in heaven.

People say, you are so anti-Semitic. You know, that whole Schofield Bible is just anti-Semitic. You're bigoted.

Well, excuse me for reading the Bible the way God wrote it. You know, take it up with Him. But be aware that that's a short-sighted view.

They will catch up. They get in the millennial kingdom what we get now. They are set aside.

The elder shall serve the younger. The last shall be first. But God is using us to make them

jealous and to provoke them to love and good works.

And they'll see us. We're going to be their Old Testament in the millennium. They are our Old Testament now.

We will be their Old Testament. They'll have a thousand years to look back at the record of our lives and this age and learn from it. They will have the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we have now in its fullness in the millennium.

Remember the prophecy in Joel 2, 23 and 24. Peter quotes it at Pentecost when the Spirit comes down. He says this is what the prophet Joel was talking about.

Well, the fulfillment of the prophet Joel is not us. It's the millennial kingdom. So, just be aware.

These people... Did Joram have any idea that his stuff was going to be recorded for all time in the pages of Scripture? No. Do you have any idea that your life is going to be recorded and is going to be used in all of the eternity future? How big do you think the Bible is going to be for all eternity? Well, it's going to be a lot bigger than this one. The Word of God lives and abides forever and the episodes and the records of history... We're living this out and going through all of this, struggling against sin and experiencing God's blessings and availing ourselves of His grace for a reason.

Eternity is a long time. But guess what? There's going to be a great big Bible to learn and study from. Our lives are being recorded.

You know the Scriptures that say there are books being kept and the books are going to be opened and they're going to be read. What do you think is in those books? Do you think you're not in the books? You are. Do you think what you do in the smallest, quietest places doesn't count? Do you think that what is spoken in the closet will not be shouted from the housetops? What you do matters.

What you think matters. How we live matters. These two ladies had no idea their little conversation and their little baby eating episode was going to be recorded in Scripture for all time.

But it is. Do you think if they had known, they might have taken a different tack? Come up with a better plan? Waited a day? You know the tragedy of this is that this little child died and salvation was just a day away. One day away.

Two days actually for that child. After two days, your dead bones will live. On the third day, you will rise again.

It's two days since that child died. And on the third day, there is plenty throughout the land. Anyway, here we have these four lepers.

And they said to one another, why are we sitting here until we die? If we say we will enter the

city, the famine is in the city and we shall die there. In other words, it's gotten so bad that even though we're kept on the outskirts, we can go in now. I mean, people are so desperate that whether or not we're lepers doesn't really matter anymore.

We could actually go into the city, but what's the point? It's kind of like when law enforcement, you think about New Orleans when they had the hurricane Katrina and law enforcement was gone. So people said, well, we can do what we want. We can loot.

We can pillage. We can enter houses and look around for stuff. But these lepers say, well, we can do that, but what's the point? There's nothing there.

Going into the city doesn't really help us even though it's so desperate that now we can. Let's go to the Syrians. The worst they can do is kill us and we're going to die anyway.

Now, I will tell you that these next several verses and in fact, quite a bit of the rest of this chapter is deeply troubled in the Hebrew. It's kind of like this page got wet. Not to where you can't reconstruct it, but there are some inelegancies that come out in the English translation and when you look at it in Hebrew, you say, ah, I see what happened.

For example, and there's a funny little word play that almost got lost here and I'll just ask you to remember right now that we're talking about lepers and the word for lepers is, it starts with an M and then it's got a TS and then it's got an R and then it's got a Y and then it's got an M again. Mits-er-ee-um. Mits-er-ee-um.

Those are the consonants, okay? And there's an evil ion right before the end. Okay, that's the word for leper. So just hold on to that.

Mits-er-ee-um. Just hold that thought. If we say we'll enter the city, the famine is in there, we'll die.

If we sit here, we die. So therefore, let's go surrender to the army of the Syrians. They've at least got food.

Maybe we'll get fed. The worst that can happen is we'll die. But the other two options end in death.

So, you know, let's gamble. If they keep us alive, we shall live. And if they kill us, we shall only die.

So, what's the diff? So, verse 5, They rose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians. And when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise, no one was there. For the Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses.

They don't hear the noise of thunder. They don't hear the noise of earthquake. They don't hear the noise of mighty rushing waters.

What do they hear? The noise of what? Chariots and horsemen. Chariots and horsemen. Any faint recollection of chariots and horsemen in our recent context? Like the previous page? Lord open his eyes that he can see the fiery chariots and horsemen of the armies of God surrounding Elisha and keeping him safe.

Where is Elisha right now? Oddly enough, not in Dothan. He's in a house in Samaria. Therefore, the army of the horsemen and chariots and you remember God opened Gehazi's eyes so that he could see them.

So what has he done for the Syrians whose eyes were shut and eyes were opened in the preceding section? What has he done now? He's opened their ears and they can hear the chariots and horsemen because they're there. They're surrounding Elisha and in this case, surrounding the city of Samaria. So here's the besieging Syrians just like there was the raider band trying to take Elisha and there was the chariots and horsemen.

Well now, here's this entire Syrian army and outside of them are the chariots and horsemen of God. And so God opens their ears just like he opened their eyes and they hear the sound of chariots and horsemen. So what do they conclude? Oh my goodness, we're surrounded by the chariots and horsemen of God.

Well, obviously not. What do they think? There is allies. There is an allied force that is coming to the rescue.

You know, dun-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun-dun. All the cowboy movies. You know, just when the fort's surrounded you think they're going to be overwhelmed.

Here comes the cavalry over the hill or, you know, in the later days they would reverse it. Here's all these Indians lining the thing that are friendly Indians and they come down. So they hear this noise.

The Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses, the noise of a great army. So they said to one another, Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us. Now, just as a minor detail here, you know where Samaria is, right? And you know where Egypt is.

You know how far Egyptians would have to come. They would have to come all the way from the south. They'd have to come across the desert.

They'd have to come through Judah and come through half of the northern kingdom to get to Samaria. This is not Egyptians. However, the word looks so much like Egyptians that they translated it Egyptians.

And even in the Masoretic text it has become Egyptians, but it's not. It's M'Tzrayim. M'Tzrayim.

The only difference in this word and the preceding word is the ion at the end. It's the only

difference. But this is not the M'Tzrayim, which is Egyptians in Hebrew.

M'Tzrayim. These are the M'Tzrayim, which are Silesians. They're up in the same area of Syria.

They're allies and friends of the Syrians. Silesia is up there. Remember, Paul had some dealings with the Silesians.

It's up near Asia Minor and so on. But these are northern guys, not the Egyptians. One of the ways we know this is the case, what sort of government does Egypt have? How many kings are there in Egypt? There's one, right? The pharaoh.

It's the king of Egypt. Notice this says kings, plural. The Syrians and the M'Tzrayim, these are city-state guys.

These are local warlord-chieftain guys. Like the days of knights in armor where a guy would have a castle and his own little militia. So he says they have hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the M'Tzrayim, the kings of the Silesians, these other guys that are up north.

In other words, we've been flanked. We've come down to attack Samaria and these guys that are north of us are coming behind us. You see what I mean? They're not facing the enemy.

They hear the enemy behind them. And this panics them. They've been flanked.

They feel surrounded. They've got Samaria in front of them and they've got the M'Tzrayim and the Hittites behind them. And this is why they panic.

Now, does this remind you of anything that we've looked at recently in Kings? Like, say, Chapter 3. Hold your finger here and go back just a little bit. Do you remember the stuff in Chapter 3 when Moab rebels against Israel and the united kings of Israel and Judah march around the Salt Sea and they're going to go around and attack Moab? Do you remember that whole deal? And how was that victory achieved? Remember when the water showed up and it was blood red and the guys got spooked and ran away? God caused a miraculous intervention that spooked the enemy and they fled. This is the second time that God has used a miraculous intervention to spook the enemy so that they flee.

Whose days are we in here? The days of Elisha. Things happen in pairs. And this is a second example to northern Israel.

Hello, I'm your God. I can solve these problems in one day when you've been under siege for weeks. Will you not turn? Why will you die, O house of Israel, all day long? I have held out my hands to a disobedient and stiff-necked people.

Why would we as believers not live an active life of faith and obedience and enjoy the blessings and the security and the peace and the grace of God on a daily basis? To not do so is just as dumb as these northern Israelites and their king who in the face of repeated demonstrations of God's power and God's grace don't get it. Do they earn or deserve? Are they people of faith? Do

they qualify for divine deliverance here? This is gratis. This is a free demonstration that they neither earn nor deserve.

And sadly, they really don't even appreciate it. God has done this for them before. And they're just insensible to it.

They're numb. And you ask yourself, how can somebody be this? Who's really blind here? Blind to the presence and power of God. Blind to the grace and the provision of God.

Blind to the forward-leaning, compassionate, loving God in heaven trying to cajole, trying to coax, trying to draw, trying to bring about through positive action reconciliation and restoration of that fellowship and that relationship and that covenant arena of blessing with His people rather than having to judge them, rather than having them be defeated and destroyed, rather than having them overrun. God could have just said, hands off, you all are paying no attention to me. Syrians walk on in.

Let them eat their babies and eat doves' dung and then you just finish off what's left. But God doesn't. God forestalls that predicted discipline and that divine judgment that was stated back in Deuteronomy.

If you insist on being disobedient, seven times more I will allow bad things to happen and if you still don't turn, it'll get seven times worse and if you still don't turn, it will get seven times worse. All of this is designed to turn them. How bad does it have to get for us before we turn? And I say we in the theoretical sense.

It's like the apostle says, I am convinced of better things of you, brethren, things pertaining to deliverance and salvation. But this is good to keep tucked away in our minds as what happens when you get complacent, what happens when you get apathetic, what happens when you get lazy and forget. God is actively marching onward in His plan and purpose and we need to be actively moving along with it so that it doesn't end up rolling over us and there's no excuse.

Why would we let that happen? God wants to bless us. He wants to bless these people and He's blessing them for free, no charge. They haven't offered a sacrifice, they haven't gotten in sackcloth and ashes, they haven't repented, they haven't done anything.

The people in Nineveh did more than these people have done and God is granting them this great deliverance. So, the Lord caused them to hear this noise, the Syrians all run away in a panic, so they arose and they fled at twilight. Notice verse 7, the army of the Syrians fled at twilight, when did the lepers come in? The Mitzrayim.

When did they come into the camp? This is really kind of a, it's funny in Hebrew, it's a word play. These Mitzrayim come into the camp of the Syrians at twilight and the Syrians thought they heard Mitzrayim and they panicked and ran. It's like these four lepers drove away the whole Syrian army.

Four Israelite lepers put to flight Ben Hadad's entire force and they're just shedding stuff, they're dropping equipment and clothing and armor and weapons and they left all their horses and their tents and their food. These guys just flee in a panic because they think they hear the army of the Hittites and the army of the Mitzrayim, but it's really just four Mitzrayim walking in because they got nothing to lose. Arranged and orchestrated by God.

It's that simple for God to arrange deliverance. We need to remember that this is our God. It's that easy for Him to arrange deliverance and blessing and provision for us.

It's that easy, it's that quick, one day. We want to be on the right side of our Heavenly Father, not on the wrong side. It's crazy to not cultivate and be grateful for and exploit and persevere in our relationship with God through Christ.

It's nuts to do anything else. But sometimes we have to see it in someone else. We need the parable, we need the story told to us to motivate us and to encourage us and say, Wow, there but for the grace of God go I. And that's what it's for.

It's written for us. To keep us from having to make the same palpable actual life mistake. So, they rose and fled at twilight and left the camp intact, their tents, their horses and their donkeys, and they fled for their lives.

Remember in Ephesians, we just covered the part about when the Lord Jesus ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. And these are gifts that are given to us, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, for the work of the faith, for the building up of the body, for the blessing of the body, for the mutual support and encouragement of the body. The Lord Jesus has put to flight what used to hold us captive, what used to hold us prisoner.

He has conquered it. He has taken away its power. Sin has no hold over us.

We have been set free. And being set free, why would we run back into its arms? It's just crazy. Why not run toward the Lord Jesus and all of these fantastic opportunities and blessings and future things that are just waiting for us? We're in training, we're in school, we're learning how to live in the presence of God, how to be inoculated against sin and evil.

We see it in all of its ugliness. Just look at the news. Look at girls being kidnapped and people starving and warfare and corporate corruption and international corruption of every shape, size, and description.

And this woman over in Sudan getting hung because she married outside the faith. The human race is so corrupt and so fallen. And we rob Peter to pay Paul, we try to fix a problem and we cause another.

I heard a thing this morning about the Mendez case. They're celebrating Brown v. Board of Education and the ending of segregation, which is a great thing. That was in the 1950s.

Well, 10 years earlier in California, that was really the watershed case. It was Mendez. A Mexican family brought suit, and it ended up being a class action suit because there were four schools in California that would not allow any Mexicans to attend.

And the Mendez family sued, went all the way to the district court, and won. And those schools were integrated. You think, well, see, here's a great case where some human effort went into it, and this problem was solved.

Well, they were talking to the Mendez girl, who was a child and was one of these students that then got to attend the school. Now she's an elderly lady, of course. And she said, you know, the sad thing is now there are two schools named for my parents in California, and both of them are over 99% Hispanic student schools.

We are de facto segregated, even though segregation ended in 1947 with the winning of that case in California. But the problem is, because of all the other policies in California and the huge influx of people who have come in but can't get good jobs and are working at the poverty level and are everywhere, there aren't enough people to make the schools integrated. Everybody in the community is Hispanic.

And so the whole community now is a segregated... And this is always the nature of human solutions. It's like when they thought thalidomide was going to be a great treatment for something back in the 1950s, and then all the thalidomide babies got born. It's like when they... You know, have you seen these lawsuit things on TV? If you've taken this medicine and you've gotten sick or died, contact us.

Seriously, they say that. Listen to the commercial. If you have gotten ill or died, contact us.

But, you know, we're just so fallible. We're so short-sighted. We can't see the long-term effects of things.

They sold DVDs at \$20 and \$25 a disc for people to archive their critically important media. And they said, these are archive quality. These will last, you know, hundreds of years.

And you buy these DVDs \$25 a disc. Well, guess what? They've discovered that they don't last. And all the people that archive their stuff on those, I mean, they had no way... They can't test them for 100 years or 200 years and say, look, it's all still there.

Well, the dyes in those break down just like every other kind. You know, if you're keeping your stuff on DVD, make a copy of it or put it on some other media every so often because all of those self-burning CDs and DVDs, those use organic dyes, and organic stuff breaks down. Everything put together... Ask Paul Simon.

Everything put together falls apart. It's a song. There goes Ryman Simon.

Get the album. Everything put together falls apart. Human solutions don't last.

God's solutions are great. They have eternal consequences. This momentary light affliction works for us an eternal weight of glory.

You don't have to look any further than this story to see how dumb it is to try to take the prophet's head as a solution to a famine and siege problem. When God in heaven, in one day, can utterly reverse it and use four lepers to effectively drive away the entire Syrian army. They think they hear the sound of Mitzrayim and these four lepers walk in and take everything they want.

Moral of the story, there's a God in heaven who loves us, who has made provision for us, who is leaning out, opening the windows of heaven, hoping to bless us. We just have to hear the word of the Lord. That's the first words out of Elisha's mouth through the closed doors.

Hear the word of the Lord. If these people will hear the word of the Lord, the Syrians are going to hear the sound of chariots and horsemen and they're going to flee in disarray and leave all of their loot and spoils behind. For these people, it's instant solution to the famine, instant solution to the siege.

In one day, nobody is starving. People saying, you seriously want to sell me more of that dove's dung? I don't think so. I can get a bucket of wheat for a shekel.

One day, this is the God who loves us. This is the God who sent the Lord Jesus to die for us. This is our heavenly Father.

Think about the potential that He is offering us and asking us to consider, hear the word of the Lord. Let's close here in prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for how powerfully you communicate to us through stories like this and examples like this to demonstrate your grace, your forgiveness, your compassion on us. Even while we were yet sinners, the Lord Jesus came and died for us. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will impress these things on our hearts, remind us, encourage us, motivate us to take advantage of the wonderful things we have from you through Christ, so that we can reflect your glory both now and in the ages to come.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.