

2 Kings Lesson 6

2 Kings Chapter 6

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Memory verses for this week: *Heb 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*

Introduction: In chapter 5, we studied about Naaman and how he came to Elisha and was healed of his leprosy by dipping in the Jordan River 7 times as instructed. Gehaziah followed after Naaman and received gifts when he lusted after the items, and when he returned, the plague of leprosy was placed on him and his descendants for his disobedience.

In chapter 6, we have the record of the ministry of Elisha continuing with the incident of the axe head which did float, Elisha's revelation of Benhadad's military plans, the incident of Elisha at Dothan, the invasion and siege of Samaria by the Syrians, and the pathetic deprivation which took place in Samaria. The chapter concludes with the confrontation of Jehoram's messenger with Elisha.

I. Elisha Miraculously Recovers the Lost Axe

2Ki 6:1 And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

2Ki 6:2 Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

2Ki 6:3 And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.

Elisha evidently is still near Gilgal, not distant from the Jordan River. He oversaw a school for the sons of the prophets. They had seemingly outgrown their facilities and brought the problem to Elisha.

Their suggestion was, "Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell". Elisha sent them to the Jordan River where there were numerous trees growing by the river. The idea was for the young prophets to go and cut down trees and bring back timbers by which they could erect their proposed building. To this Elisha gave his blessing. One of the young prophets urged Elisha to accompany them to which he also agreed.

2Ki 6:4 So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

2Ki 6:5 But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.

2Ki 6:6 And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.

2Ki 6:7 Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

They came to Jordan and began to cut down wood. One of the party lost the head of a borrowed axe while cutting. Any borrowed tool is valuable and you would never want to lose some one else's tool. Wrought iron implements were expensive and not easy to replace.

Upon hearing of the loss, Elisha asked about where the axe head fell in the river. After being shown where, he threw a stick in and the iron did swim. The word translated as swim (Pwu tsuwph) essentially means to float. Elisha instructed the man to pick up the axe which he did. Though not major in its result, this miracle demonstrates that God is willing to intervene and help His people in even the 'little' problems of life.

II. Elisha Reveals Benhadad's Battle Plans

2Ki 6:8 Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp.

2Ki 6:9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.

2Ki 6:10 And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

2Ki 6:11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?

2Ki 6:12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

Benhadad again went to war against Israel. In private council with his military advisors, he informed them where they would encamp. God revealed to Elisha the plans of the Syrians who in turn warned Jehoram.

Jehoram sent spies to verify the Syrian incursion and thus avoided their ambush. his happened more than twice.

In verse 11, we find that the king of Syria soon sensed his plans were being revealed to the Israelites. His conclusion was that one of his own men was informing Israel what was being planned. It evidently was common knowledge in Israel as to what was happening. Syrian intelligence eventually picked upon what Elisha was doing. This was then reported to Benhadad. They warned him that his most privy comments, made even in his own bedroom, were known to Elisha and afterwards relayed to Jehoram.

2Ki 6:13 And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.

2Ki 6:14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they

came by night, and compassed the city about.

The Syrian king ordered spies to go and find out where Elisha was located. The king was informed that Elisha dwelt in a little town called Dothan in north-central Israel. He sent a great force of cavalymen, chariots, and infantrymen to surround the place by night.

2Ki 6:15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

2Ki 6:16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

2Ki 6:17 And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

The servant of Elisha in rising early that next morning went out and saw their little town surrounded by a powerful army along the heights above. It is not clear if the servant of Elisha here was still Gehazi although he is mentioned by name in chapter 8. He fled back to Elisha and cried out, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" The servant saw the problem from a human perspective and perceived no escape.

Elisha saw things from God's perspective. He answers, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Humanly, there was Elijah, his servant, and the small number of men of the little town of Dothan. Upon the heights above and surrounding them was a division of the Syrian Army in full array.

Elisha prayed. In asking God to open his servants eyes, the young man saw the angelic armies of heaven poised above the Syrians with horses and chariots of fire. Elisha knew full well the power of God at his disposal. It was there all the time. Now his servant realized it as well.

2Ki 6:18 And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

2Ki 6:19 And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.

2Ki 6:20 And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.

The Syrian force moved out and came down into Dothan. Elisha prayed and asked God to blind them all. That God did. Blinded and helpless, Elisha directed them to follow him and he would lead them to whom they were seeking. However, he marched them ten miles to Samaria. Upon arriving in Samaria, Elisha prayed again for God to open their eyes which He did. To the

astonishment of the Syrian army, they realized they were now in Samaria, the capital city of Israel, and before the king.

2Ki 6:21 And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?

2Ki 6:22 And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.

2Ki 6:23 And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

It is apparent in realizing what had happened that the king of Israel was eager to fall upon his disadvantaged enemy. He twice asked permission of Elisha to attack them. Of note is Jehoram's reference to Elisha as my father showing his respect for him. Elisha directed King Jehoram to feed his vanquished enemy and treat them humanely even as he would other prisoners of war. He then directed them to be released. In being sent home humanely, the Syrians ceased from sending marauding bands into Israel to plunder their neighbor.

III. The Syrian Siege of Samaria

2Ki 6:24 And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

2Ki 6:25 And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver.

Notwithstanding the kindness which Jehoram had shown to his forces, Benhadad now attacked Israel with his entire army. His animosity was still evident. His strategy this time was to starve them out by military siege. The starvation in Samaria became so severe that a donkey's head sold for eighty pieces of silver and even bird manure was sold for fuel at inflated prices.

2Ki 6:26 And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king.

2Ki 6:27 And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?

2Ki 6:28 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow.

2Ki 6:29 So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

2Ki 6:30 And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh.

2Ki 6:31 Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.

A woman cried out to Jehoram for help. All he could do was protest that if God would not help them, what could he do? The king then came upon a woman arguing with another. He asked further, What aileth thee? The desperate conditions in the city were evident. Mothers near starvation and crazed with hunger had stooped so low as to eat their small children.

Two such women had agreed to eat the one's son one day and the other's the next. However, in receiving some nourishment, albeit by cannibalism, the second woman then refused to share her son with the first.

The king was revolted upon hearing this awful story. He therefore rent his royal garments revealing sackcloth which he wore privily to show his despair. He publicly displayed himself before his people. This proud wicked king of Israel had been finally humbled. God allowed this terrible situation in part to break the hard, proud heart of this backslidden king. In verse 31, King Jehoram blames Elisha for the release of the Syrians and then the siege of Samaria. Jehoram vowed to cut off the head of Elisha before that day ended.

IV. The King's Message of Vengeance

2Ki 6:32 But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?

2Ki 6:33 And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?

Meanwhile, Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him. The elders mentioned likely refer to the older prophets associated with Elisha. He referred to Jehoram as the son of a murderer because his mother Jezebel had ordered Naboth killed. (See I Kings 21.

Elisha informed his colleagues that Jehoram had sent to behead him. Elisha ordered his colleagues to bar the door and detain Jehoram's henchman when he arrived. He knew that the king himself would not be far behind. Sure enough, the man from Jehoram arrived. Verse 2 of the next chapter implies that Jehoram showed up immediately thereafter. The he above very well may have been Jehoram himself speaking to Elisha.

His word to the prophet was that this siege and famine was of God. Why should he fight it any longer. Jehoram was ready to throw in the towel and surrender. He was broken and unwilling to wait for God's deliverance. That would come the

next day as the following chapter details.

Matthew Henry said this about the King's speech.

The king's passionate speech, when he came to prevent the execution of his edict for the beheading of Elisha. He seems to have been in a struggle between his convictions and his corruptions, knew not what to say, but, seeing things brought to the last extremity, he even abandoned himself to despair (2Ki 6:33): *This evil is of the Lord*. Therein his notions were right and well applied; it is a general truth that all penal evil is of the Lord, as the first cause, and sovereign judge (Amo 3:6), and this we ought to apply to particular cases: if all evil, then this evil, whatever it is we are now groaning under, whoever are the instruments, God is the principal agent of it.

But his inference from this truth was foolish and wicked: *What should I wait for the Lord any longer?* When Eli, and David, and Job, said, *It is of the Lord*, they grew patient upon it, but this bad man grew outrageous upon it: "I will neither fear worse nor expect better, for worse cannot come and better never will come: we are all undone, and there is no remedy." It is an unreasonable thing to be weary of waiting for God, for he is a God of judgment, and blessed are all those that wait for him.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.

