

## 2 Kings 7-8

### **The Siege of Samaria**

This story begins in 2 Kings 6:24. Again, we continue with the conflict with the northern adversary, Aram and they have now moved from border raids to all-out war and they have laid siege to the capital city of Israel, Samaria. The idea of siege warfare was to cut off the people living in the fortified city so that they cannot receive food and supplies from the outside. They are then faced with starvation and disease until they finally prevail upon their king to surrender to the invaders. In this story, the king interacts with a woman, resident of the city, and she brings her problem to him for his ruling and justice. Two women make an agreement to eat their sons because they were starving. The first sacrificed hers and they ate, but the second, when it was her turn, hid her son and refused to offer him up as food. The king is so disgusted by the state of affairs that he tore his robe and blamed God and Elisha, his prophet, for the siege and plans to kill him. I think that his story is interesting when contrasted with a similar event in the life of Solomon (1Kings 3:16-28). Two women, two sons, one dead one alive, and the king's judgment are all common factors in the stories. Where the first story highlights Solomon's divine wisdom, the second story highlights the king's foolishness and lack of faith in God, whom he blames for his tragic situation.

The king and a trusted leader come to the house of Elisha to accuse him and God of bringing this disaster upon the city and Elisha tells them that the siege will be broken by tomorrow but the king's official will see it but will not eat any food because he will die. That night a group of lepers went out to the camp of the enemy to surrender because they were starving and when they got there the camp was empty. The Lord had caused the Arameans to hear a great army approaching and they thought that the king of Israel had hired the kings of Egypt and the Hittites to come to his aid; so they left everything and fled in fear for their lives. The leper began to eat their food and steal things of value from the camp. Then they realized they needed to share the news with the king. So they went back to the city and reported to the king, but he thought that it was a ruse and the army was trying to lure them out of the city walls to destroy them. They sent a group of soldiers on the remaining horses to find the enemy army and found their weapons and carts abandoned along the road. Finally they returned and opened the city and the official who did not believe was trampled by the hungry people as they raced out of the city to eat the food in the enemy's camp. And so Elisha's prediction came true.

### **The Shunammite Woman's land restored**

This next story in chapter 8 brings us back to the woman whose son was raised from the dead. Elisha told her to leave the land because a famine of 7 years was coming. She obeyed and then returned and petitioned the king for her land to be returned. Because of the miraculous nature of her relationship with Elisha the land and all of the profit made from its agricultural production was returned to her.

Next, Elisha travels to Damascus because the king, Ben-Hadad was ill and he wanted to know if he was going to recover or die. Interestingly, the king of Israel did not consult Elijah when he wanted to know if he was going to die from his injuries and as a result he did die from them because he did not turn to the LORD his God. Here a foreign king, an enemy of the people of God turns to God for answers. Ironic.

Hazael, the king's servant, takes a gift to the prophet to ask about the recovery of the king and Elisha tells him that he will recover but that he will die later and that his kingdom will be given to Hazael and he will be a terrible enemy to the people of Israel, causing the prophet to weep for his people. Hazael returned to the king and told him that he would recover, but then the next day Hazael murdered the king and ascended to the throne.

### **Succession of the Kings of Judah**

Attention now shifts to the kings of Judah. Jehoshaphat, the righteous king, dies and his son succeeds him but his mother was the daughter of Ahab of Israel and she brought up her son as a pagan – who did not worship the LORD. It is under Jehoram that Edom rebels against Judah and they lose control of that vassal kingdom. He will reign for 8 years and then be succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who is also evil.

Much like in the book of Judges, the society is following its leaders farther and farther away from the worship of the Lord and the keeping of his law. The consequences of their sin are instability in their politics, the reduction of their foreign influence and control, plagues and oppression within their borders, and a general increase in violence. Does this sound familiar? We are all surprised by what is happening in our nation but when we read these stories, we walk away with a new perspective. It should give us a sense of urgency because both Samaria and Jerusalem will be destroyed because they abandoned the LORD and his laws.