

Week 14: *The Siege against Samaria – 2 Kings 6:24–7:16*

Hook



Main Point: Even in times of discipline, God ultimately brings salvation and grace.

A 2024 survey of 2,000 American adults asked a simple question: What do you regret most in life? The results are interesting:

- People reported regretting what they didn't do more than what they did
- 40% regretted not speaking up
- 36% wished they had visited family and friends more
- 35% were disappointed they didn't pursue their dreams
- 49% regretted purchases they had made
- 43% regretted conflicts with friends or family
- 36% regretted making unnecessary comments¹

Q: If you could go back and give advice to your younger self, what decisions would you want to revisit?

There's something sobering about that kind of reflection. Regrets come not just from wrong choices, but also from missed opportunities and delayed obedience.

And that sets the stage for 2 Kings 6–7. Because here, Israel isn't just dealing with personal regret – they are living in the consequences of covenant unfaithfulness. They turned from God, and now Samaria is under siege, starving and unraveling.

What once felt distant – the warnings of covenant curses – has now become reality. And yet, even here, God is not finished.

RECAP: In the first lesson, we talked about the role of the Old Testament prophets as God's messengers calling His people to repent and how they pointed ahead to Jesus. In week 2, we saw God's provision for both Elijah and the widow of Zarephath during the drought, which was a consequence of Israel's idolatry. In lesson 3, God raised the

widow's son from the dead, which not only showed His sovereign power but also His care for the vulnerable and His heart for all the nations. In lesson 4, we saw God's superiority over other "gods" as Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. In lesson 5, Elijah ran for his life from the wrath of Jezebel and found refuge in the Lord. God spoke to him not in the thunder and lightning but in the still, small voice.

In lesson 6, Elijah called Elisha to succeed him, and Elisha left his old life behind. Then Elijah prophesied the deaths of Jezebel and Ahab but delayed the end of Ahab's dynasty because he repented. Ahab's first son died because he worshipped false gods, and his second son became king. In lesson 7, Elijah was taken up to heaven in the whirlwind, and Elisha took over his ministry with the same Holy Spirit upon him. In lesson 8, we explored exactly what it meant when Elisha asked Elijah for a "double portion" of his spirit. In lessons 9 and 10, God brought judgment on those who rejected His prophets and His message but brought life, healing and blessing to those who came to Him in faith. In lesson 11, God fed the hungry through two miracles, healing the poison in the stew and multiplying food as Jesus did in the New Testament. In lesson 12, Elisha healed a Gentile leper and refused to take his thank-you gift, but his servant took the money instead, and we saw how Elisha responded. In lesson 13, we saw that God has a supernatural heavenly army protecting His people.

In this lesson, we will see devastation that came with the consequences of breaking the covenant come to pass, and Samaria is besieged by the Syrians.

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Book

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2 Kings 6:24–31 and Deuteronomy 28:52–57 [Read]

Talking Point 1: Turning away from God leads to desperate, despairing situations.

Q: Why did the king of Israel blame Elisha for this siege?

In the last chapter, Elisha made peace with the army of Syria. God blinded the Aramean army, and Elisha led them into their capital city, Samaria. When their eyes were opened, they realized they were trapped in enemy territory. The king of Israel, Jehoram, wanted to kill them, but Elisha gave them a feast and then let them go back to their land. Scripture says the Syrians stopped raiding Samaria after that. They had peace with Syria. For how long, we don't exactly know. Verse 24 reveals that the Aramean army returned. "Afterward" in Hebrew is a vague word that just means "sometime later." It wasn't immediately afterward – it could have been years later – but the kings of Israel (Jehoram) and Syria (Ben-Hadad) were still the same kings who had reigned during the last raid on Samaria. The king of Israel blamed Elisha for this siege because Elisha had not let him destroy the Aramean army when he had the chance.

Samaria ("watch mountain") was the capital city of Israel (N) at this point; the third capital in the first 50 years after the split.² Omri established Samaria as the capital in 880 BC on top of a large, insulated hill that was surrounded by a broad deep valley and high hills all around that. This topography made it a difficult city to attack. Archaeologists in the 1800s said that in the ancient system of warfare, "Nothing but famine could have reduced such a place."³ Ben-Hadad II of Aram/Syria⁴ first laid siege to Samaria during Ahab's reign, and God gave them supernatural victory, prophesied by an unnamed prophet (1 Kings 20). This second siege was also perpetrated by Ben-Hadad but occurred during Jehoram's reign.

The text doesn't specify how long the siege against the city lasted, but it was long enough that they ran out of food. In the ancient world, cities were surrounded by walls to protect them from attack and to control who came in and out of the city via the gates in the walls. But the city gates also made it so that access to any or all supplies could be cut off when an army laid siege to the city. The Aramean army had stopped any food from coming into the city, so once all the stockpiles were exhausted, the people became desperate. We see just how desperate in this story. Two women were arguing because they had agreed to eat both of their sons, but after they ate the first woman's son, the second woman hid her son away. This is absolutely appalling to read, but it reveals the desperation of the situation.

Another detail in the text shows us how their entire society had broken down. People were paying exorbitant prices for a donkey's head and dove's dung. A donkey was an unclean animal, and the head would have very little meat on it. Even in cultures where they could eat donkey, it was considered a low-quality meat. Doves would have still flown over the town even if the gates were blocked, so dove's dung may have been fairly plentiful. It wasn't typically used for fuel, but it could be used in dire situations or even eaten. Both these things would normally have been discarded. That people were using them – and buying them for such high prices – highlights the Samarian people's desperation.⁵

It seems almost unbelievable that something like this would happen, but God said it all the way back in Deuteronomy. It was one of the curses of the covenant, which shows us that the "curses" weren't random punishments God inflicted on the people when they disobeyed (Deuteronomy 28:15–68). Laying siege to a city and cutting off all their supplies until they either got too weak to fight back, died out, or killed each other out of hunger was a method of warfare. It took longer than other methods but caused less loss of life on the side of the besieging army.⁶

When that second exodus generation, who were about to enter the land for the first time, heard this curse in Deuteronomy, they probably couldn't imagine any of them would ever do something like that. While cannibalism was normal in some ancient cultures, it was considered abhorrent in God's law (Genesis 9:6). But it's hard to know what we are capable of until we are put in a desperate situation. (In a somewhat recent story [1972], a rugby team whose plane crashed in the Andes resorted to cannibalism to stay alive.⁷) God said even the most tender and refined among them would eat their children. And this is exactly what happened. But it was so devastating to the king to hear it that he tore his clothes, revealing the sackcloth he was wearing underneath.

Tearing your clothes and wearing sackcloth were signs of mourning, which would have been great if it meant that Jehoram were humbling himself and repenting of their sins against the Lord. Instead, he was blaming God's prophet for the siege. When the women cried out to the king for help, he responded, "If the Lord will not help you, how shall I help you?" He admitted helplessness and that Yahweh was the only One who could help. But he didn't turn to the Lord for help. Instead, he blamed God's prophet. Jehoram was right about the desperateness of their situation, but he was wrong about its cause and its solution. He wore the outward sign of repentance (sackcloth), but his actions revealed a heart of grief, despair and vengeance.

How often do we do the same thing when we find ourselves in difficult situations? We point fingers at everyone else but don't take the time to look inward and see what we may have done to have brought ourselves to that point. Sometimes we haven't done anything; bad things can just happen because we live in a fallen world. Jehoram was thinking from a physical warfare perspective: Elisha hadn't let him kill the enemy when he could. But he missed the spiritual warfare going on behind it all: God's people were only in this situation because they had turned away from Him. When we are struggling

or find ourselves in a difficult situation, we can't just look at the external, physical circumstances. We also must look at the spiritual situation.

Q: The last time you faced a desperate situation, how did you respond?

Q: Why is it hard to examine the deeper spiritual issues in our hearts?

Q: What steps do you take to repent when you are wrong?

2 Kings 6:31–7:2 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Those who trust in the Lord will find true strength.

Q: Why didn't King Jehoram want to wait on the Lord? What did he not understand?

Q: How did Elisha show unwavering faith? What is surprising about Elisha's reaction?

Jehoram swore he would kill Elisha before the day was over. The story creates a stark contrast between Jehoram's anger and Elisha's calm. Jehoram was making murderous threats, while Elisha was simply sitting in his house with the elders sitting around him. Before the messenger from the king even arrived, Elisha knew he was coming and told the elders so. He called Jehoram a "murderer," making clear that Jehoram's desire for vengeance wasn't a justifiable act of war but a personal vendetta. Elisha told the elders to shut the door and hold it fast.

The messenger brought a message from Jehoram to Elisha – "This trouble is from the Lord!" Jehoram had laid the blame not only on God's messenger, Elisha, but even on God Himself – He *sent* the siege on Samaria. While it is true the siege was a curse of the covenant, to blame God for it was a whole different thing. That would be like a child blaming the parent for grounding him when he disobeyed. Yes, technically, the parent gave the punishment, but the child earned the punishment. The child has no one to blame but himself. But like an immature child, Jehoram could not seem to admit his own responsibility in the curse of the covenant.

He also asked, "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" This implies that Elisha had told Jehoram to wait on the Lord for direction about what to do. Jehoram wasn't just rejecting that idea; he was rejecting listening to the Lord or trusting Him altogether. Jehoram had been waiting but without real trust. On some level, he knew the situation was in the Lord's hands ("If the Lord will not help you ..."), but he wasn't seeing the results he wanted, so he decided he was done trusting the Lord. He would take matters into his own hands. Jehoram was thinking on a physical level – God isn't helping us. But the narrative shows something much deeper was going on spiritually. This was the consequence of Israel's disobedience. It wasn't that God wasn't coming through for them or was taking too long to act. God was looking for repentance.

Other places in Scripture tell us those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength; that it is good for us to wait on the Lord (Psalm 27:14; Isaiah 40:31; Lamentations 3:25–

26). Jehoram was supposed to be learning something in the waiting. But because he was not waiting with trust, he wasn't learning from it; he was only getting more and more frustrated. Jehoram rejected the waiting, he wanted results *now*. He wanted physical help without any spiritual change. He wanted God's help, but he didn't want to submit to God's authority. This is treating God not like the Lord but like a genie in a bottle or a magic charm.

Elisha's reaction is somewhat surprising. Instead of telling Jehoram he brought this on himself and would just have to suffer the consequences, Elisha seemed to give in to his demands for immediate action. Jehoram's demand was really a threat; he had sworn an oath to have Elisha executed. But before the messenger even arrived, Elisha knew what was happening, which shows prophetic insight, not submission to the king. The king may have been making demands, but Elisha took control of the situation. When he told the king what God was about to do, Elisha wasn't complying with the king under pressure; he was doing what prophets always do – declaring what God had already determined. He answered with “the word of the Lord.”

The immediacy of Elisha's prophecy wasn't about giving in to the king's demands; it was showing again that God can do the impossible. When Elisha declared that fine flour would sell for a shekel in Samaria by the next day—a dramatic drop in price—the captain scoffed at the prophecy. Even if God opened a window from heaven, a phrase reminiscent of the manna in the wilderness, how could this be? Even though God had done miracles like this before, both the manna and the previous time He had rescued them from siege, the captain didn't believe it was possible. Because he doubted, Elisha told the captain he would see it come to pass but would not eat of it.

The contrast here is key. The king and his army doubted, despaired, and blamed. Elisha showed a calm certainty in the Word of God, highlighting that he was not threatened by Jehoram. He stood independent of him, even while under threat. This moment reinforces the themes of Kings – that 1) God is not manipulated by human beings, even powerful ones, 2) deliverance only comes by God, and 3) the word of God's true prophets is reliable even when it seems absurd. This scene with Elisha and Jehoram fits into a very consistent biblical pattern: kings trying to control the prophet, but the prophet remaining accountable only to God (1 Kings 13, 22; 2 Chronicles 16; Jeremiah 37–38).

Q: How have you experienced doubt, despair and frustration with God? How did God show you He was in control and had a plan?

Q: Have you ever spoken out for God when others were abusing His name?

Q: Why is it hard to wait on the Lord? Why do we want results NOW? What kinds of things can we learn in seasons of waiting?

2 Kings 7:3–20 [Read]

Talking Point 3: God can do the impossible, and what true prophets prophesy comes true.

Q: Why did the Syrian army flee their camp? How does this show God's power?

Q: How did Elisha's prophesy come true? What does this tell us about God?

The captain of the army doubted God could change the situation of the famine so much in one day that fine flour would be sold for a shekel, but that is exactly what happened. Although it didn't happen through God's opening a window from heaven as he said. Instead, God made the army hear the sound of a great army – chariots and horses. No human battle was fought, no alliance was formed, no human strategy was executed. God alone intervened with His supernatural power. This is a vivid demonstration that the deliverance of Israel did not depend on military strength, political leadership or human ingenuity. It depended entirely on the power of God, who can do the impossible. A besieged city on the brink of collapse was transformed into a place of abundance – not gradually but suddenly, decisively, and within hours.

The story makes a sharp shift in main characters. We go from the perspective of prophets, elders, kings, and army commanders to that of four lepers sitting at the city gate, a common place for the outcasts of society to beg money from those entering the city. But no one was entering the city under these circumstances; even that small hope was gone. These men who were cut off from society and felt doomed to death no matter what became the unlikely instruments through which God revealed His miraculous power. Their reasoning was simple. If they stayed where they were or entered the city, they would surely die of the famine. But if they went to the camp of the Arameans, there was a slight chance they would let them live. Humanly speaking, they acted out of desperation, but providentially, they stepped right into God's miracle. What they expected to be a risk became a revelation.

The irony was striking. While Jehoram had despaired and blamed the prophet, and his officer openly doubted the possibility of such a reversal, the fulfillment of God's promise came through the least likely people and the least expected means. The lepers initially kept the good news to themselves, feasting and hoarding, but they soon realized they had to share the good news. The king didn't believe them at first; he thought the Aramean army was just hiding, waiting to ambush them, so he sent out two horses to check out the situation.

This passage underscores a central theological truth which runs throughout all of Scripture: God can do the impossible. The officer who scoffed at Elisha's prophecy embodied the voice of human skepticism. His words reflect a worldview bounded by natural limits. But the story decisively broke those limits. Not only did the promised abundance arrive, but it came in a way no one could have predicted. The invisible work of God overturned visible reality.

At the same time, this story affirms the reliability of the prophetic word. Everything unfolded exactly as Elisha had declared: the timing, the abundance, and even the judgment. The officer who doubted was trampled in the gate as the people surged out to seize the spoil. This detail was not incidental; it reinforced that God's Word is not only powerful but precise. Both promise and warning come to pass without fail.

In many cases throughout the Old Testament, the word of the prophet brought judgment, but here, his word brought unexpected salvation. Not because the people deserved it; the king did not repent. Both he and his captain doubted God. God saved His people because of His great steadfast covenant love for them, not because of anything they did to deserve it. This points us ahead to the gospel of Jesus Christ, a gospel of grace, unmerited favor. Just as Israel was delivered by the supernatural work of God, so our salvation and deliverance come not by human effort but through the powerful and faithful intervention of God.

Q: What "impossible" things has God accomplished in your life?

Q: Why is believing in God's supernatural work important to the believer?

Q: What situations in your life feel impossible right now? How can you trust God to help?

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Took

Main Point: Even in times of discipline, God ultimately brings salvation and grace.

The failures of Israel and Judah's kings throughout 1–2 Kings remind us of the tragic fruit of rebellion – division, death, suffering and the slow unraveling of life under sin. What begins as spiritual compromise always moves toward real pain and brokenness.

But into that storyline of failure comes a greater King.

Jesus says, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). He also calls us, “Abide in Me, and I in you” (John 15:4). Unlike the kings who led God's people into more rebellion, Christ leads us into life, forgiveness, and restoration.

If you find yourself walking in rebellion in some area of your life, Scripture doesn't call you to hide—it calls you to repent and return to God.

“Return to Me with all your heart” (Joel 2:12–13).

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

Today is the day to seek His face, turn from sin, receive forgiveness, and embrace His will again. Because even in the middle of consequences, Jesus is offering life.

CHALLENGES

THINK: What battles and enemies are you facing right now? In what ways do you hope the Lord will rescue you? How might the Lord be working in your time of waiting? What can you learn from it? What would it look like for you to really trust in God right now? How do you think people can really trust God? Who in your life seems to trust God, no matter the circumstances? How can you learn from that person?

PRAY: Pray for God to grow trust in you. Ask Him to bring circumstances in your life that force you trust Him and show you what trust really looks like. Pray for Him to give you strength, wisdom, courage and faith to trust Him even when things seem impossible.

ACT: Prayer walk. Take a nature hike this week or just go for a long walk around your neighborhood. Spend the time talking openly and honestly with God, pouring out your

heart to Him – your worries, doubts, fears, concerns and frustrations. End your prayer time by putting your trust in Him to do what is best in your life.

¹ <https://talkerresearch.com/americans-bad-decisions-and-missed-opportunities/>

² When the nation first split (930 BC), Jeroboam established his capital city at Shechem, which was originally a place of promise and worship for Jacob's family (Genesis 12:7; 33:18–20), but became a place of slaughter when Levi and Simeon avenged their sister's honor (Genesis 34:1–29). Jeroboam's son Nadab only reigned two years; when Baasha conspired against him and became king, he moved the capital to Tirzah (909 BC). His son Elah reigned two years until he was overthrown by his official Zimri, who reigned seven days until Omri, the commander of the army, overthrew him. Omri reigned six years in Tirzah, then moved the capital to Samaria (880 BC), where it remained until the Assyrians overthrew Israel in 722 BC. Omri was the father of Ahab, who married Jezebel and was the evil king during Elijah's ministry. His son Ahaziah reigned briefly after him, then his son Jehoram (852–841 BC).

³ "Samaria," *The Christian Messenger, Volume 19* (London: Ralph Fenwick, 1884).

⁴ Scholars refer to this king as Ben-Hadad II. "Ben-Hadad" is more of a title than a name, like "Pharaoh" in Egypt. It means "son of Hadad" who was the storm god, the chief god of Aram. The first Ben-Hadad mentioned in the Bible is Ben-Hadad I who formed an alliance with Asa, king of Judah, against Baasha, King of Israel (1 Kings 15:18–20). Ben-Hadad II besieged Samaria during Ahab's reign (1 Kings 20) and then again during Jehoram's reign (2 Kings 6). Ben-Hadad III succeeded his father (II); during his reign, Jehoash, king of Israel, regained territories that had been lost to Aram, fulfilling a prophesy of Elisha (1 Kings 13:18–19).

⁵ *Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*

⁶ Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, III, 7, 4.

⁷ Kieran Mulvaney, History.com: [Miracle of the Andes: How Survivors of the Flight Disaster Struggled to Stay Alive | HISTORY](#)