

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## 2 KINGS 5-7

Elisha, like his mentor, Elijah, was a man who *stood up for God* in the midst of a kingdom that had *fallen from God*. Before he began his ministry Elisha *asked for and received* a double portion of the spiritual power that had been upon Elijah.

The result is that he accomplished twice the work. Elisha ministered twice as long as Elijah - and he did twice as many recorded miracles as Elijah had done.

Elisha ended up a prophet in Israel for half a century - from 850-800 BC.

Elisha was a contemporary of two other prophets, Obadiah and Joel. And he had a heart for the students in the school of the prophets. He may have been a teacher to Jonah and Amos. Elisha took over the strategic ministry of Elijah.

2 Kings 4 records four of Elisha's miracles. The chapter could be subtitled, "*The Best of Elisha*". Last week we tackled the first two miracles.

Tonight we'll look at the last two. Let's begin in verse 38...

**"And Elisha returned to Gilgal, and there was a famine in the land.**

**Now the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets."**

Elisha was hosting a pastors' conference and it was time to feed the prophets. Hey, when pastors get together - *eating* is

an important part of the fellowship.

“So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, though they did not know what they were.” This is not good. When the chef doesn’t know what he’s putting in the stew – beware! “Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, “Man of God, there is death in the pot!” And they could not eat it.”

Evidently, the unidentified herbs and vines were poisonous. But they didn’t know it until someone sipped the stew, and shouted, “There is death in the pot.”

This is the problem with the whole human race. Satan has interjected death into the pot. Sin entered the world, and now contaminates every area of life.

“So (Elisha) said, “Then bring some flour.” And he put it into the pot, and said, “Serve it to the people, that they may eat.” And there was nothing harmful in the pot.” What’s most interesting about this miracle is what Elisha doesn’t do...

He never tries to pick out the poisonous root – the lethal ingredients.

Many people think this is the solution to sin. They put themselves through endless rounds of introspection, and self-evaluation. They think it’s up to them to sift through the stew, and find all the poisonous ingredients. But once the poison is interjected it permeates the whole stew. Broth and root both are all contaminated.

Instead, I love what Elisha does. He simply adds some flour to the stew.

Rather than pick out the poison he trusts in an additive to neutralize and purify the stew. This is Jesus' solution to sin. Start adding God's Word - walk in God's love - interject the influence of the Holy Spirit - fellowship with other believers...

Fill your life with the good things of God, and it purges the poison. As Galatians 5:16 tells us, **“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”**

Recently, I read where a group of local pastors were in the news protesting the Sunday sale of alcohol. I empathize with their concern. Drunkenness wrecks lives and families. But even if the pastors succeed in outlawing the sale of hard liquor on Sundays I doubt if it'll do much to increase the overall level of morality.

The solution to sin *inside us* and *in society* is the same. You get nowhere trying to pluck out the poison. The Jesus solution is to add the flour of the Holy Spirit.

When people are full of new wine their desire for boos will disappear.

Verse 42 **“Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, 20 loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, “Give it to the people, that they may eat.”**

**But his servant said, “What? Shall I set this before 100 men?”** In other words, it's not enough. You can feed 100 hungry prophets with just 20 loaves of bread.

“He said again, “Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: ‘They shall eat and have some left over.’” So he set it before them; and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.” Here’s a miracle of multiplication... The third one associated with Elijah and Elisha...

In 1 Kings 17 the widow’s handful of flour and a trace of oil refused to run out. Earlier in chapter 4 another widow’s jar of oil filled as many pots as were made available. Now 20 loaves feed 100 men, and the prophets still have leftovers.

God can do a *lot* with our *little* when we give all that we have to Him.

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, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria... He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper.”

Here was a decorated military man. The Jewish rabbis said he was the archer who shot the arrow that killed King Ahab. Naaman had distinguished himself in battle, and risen in rank. He was general in the Syrian army – a national hero.

Naaman had 5 stars on his lapel, but just underneath there was a white rash on his skin. His patch of leprosy made all his many victories seem miniscule. Leprosy was the AIDS of the ancient world. It carried an inescapable death sentence.

Notice again the last line in verse 1, “He was also a mighty man of valor, **but** a leper.” I hope you realize we all have a “*but*” in our lives. Nobody’s life is perfect.

No matter how blessed you might be everybody has some

problem that steals away their joy - and tarnishes their success. God sees to it that this is the case in everyone's life. This need, this restlessness is God's way of drawing us to Jesus.

“And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. Then she said to her mistress, "If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy." Obviously, she was referring to Elisha.

“And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus said the girl who is from the land of Israel." Then the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he departed and took with him 10 talents of silver, 6000 shekels of gold, and 10 changes of clothing. Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy.” The silver, and gold, and clothing would be payment for the miracle.

“It happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me." King Jehoram is well aware he has no healing powers.

He figures the King of Syria must be picking a fight. He's trying to conjure up some reason to accuse him of non-

cooperation, and justify an attack.

“So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, “Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.”

Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan 7 times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.”

Naaman is a dignitary. He's use to the *red carpet treatment*. But Elisha doesn't even bother to come out of the house to greet him. He's unimpressed with his rank and reputation. Worldly credentials mean nothing to Elisha. He couldn't care less about the stars on his shoulders – Elisha's only interested is what's in his heart.

Verse 11 tells us, “**But Naaman became furious,**” I'm sure he thought, “*I've traveled 100 miles. At least this guy can get off his tuff to shake my hand.*”

“**Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.'**” Naaman thought Elisha would be honored to help a man of his stature. He could wave his hand around. Orchestrate some holy hoopla. Make a show.

After some high-flying theatrics, and some charismatic attention-grabbing Elisha could heal Naaman's leprosy – then get his autograph afterwards.

Once clean of this nasty leprosy Naaman might even agree to a photo-op.

Naaman is about to learn a lesson. God's healing and miracles come not to the mighty, or worthy, or deserving – but to the humble – to people with faith. God not only removes Naaman's spot - but in the process he'll deal with his pride as well.

Naaman continues his tirade, "Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage." If this is all the prophet wanted me to do I could've stayed home. The rivers of Syria are better than a muddy Jordan.

Verse 13 "And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it?"

How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

So he went down and dipped 7 times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God..." And after each of the first 6 dips he felt like a complete idiot. He was so embarrassed. His horses had drunk from this river. It can't possibly heal.

But after the 7<sup>th</sup> dip - "his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Of course it wasn't the river that healed him – God's supernatural power responded to his humility. Simple obedience became the leper's cure.

Understand Naaman had two problems most of us share...

First was **sophistication**. He was into image. He was a control freak. Like all politicians his goal was to manipulate situations to put Naaman in a good light

His second problem was scientific **rationalism**. If he couldn't understand it - it couldn't be true. Everything had to be filtered through human logic and reason.

I believe these are the reasons we see so few miracles today. Our *rationalism* and *sophistication* hinder God's work. Naaman eventually yielded to a command he couldn't understand, and was sure to humiliate – but that's when God did the miraculous. Naaman learned important lessons – “Trust God even when you can't tame the situation – have faith even when you can't figure it all out.”

Verse 15 “And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, "Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant."

Naaman wants to contribute to the EEA (*Elisha Evangelistic Association*). This is why he brought 10 talents of silver, 6000 shekels of gold, and 10 new suits.

“But (Elisha) said, "As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing." And he urged him to take it, but he refused.” Elisha turns down the money. The manner of the miracle had been designed by God to prove that His blessings cannot be bought with money, or with honor, or with clout.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:8, “Freely you have received, freely give.”



“So Naaman said, "Then, if not, please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth; for your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD.” Here’s the first example of taking back dirt from the holy land. Actually, this was a response to his superstitious upbringing.

Remember the concept of localized deities. Every parcel had its own unique gods. Naaman takes back dirt so the God of Israel will feel more at home.

This was nothing but silly superstition. The God of Israel is the only true God – He is Sovereign over heaven and earth. God is not contained to a load of dirt.

Naaman is a typical new believer. He learns of God’s love. He puts His faith in God – but then he has to *unlearn* all the lies he’s believed in the past. Christian discipleship is *learning God’s Word*, and *unlearning the world’s falsehoods*.

Naaman’s comments in verse 18 show that he’s taking his newfound faith seriously. He’s pondering the demands of discipleship. Following God would have some dramatic implications for a Syrian of his stature and position.

He says, “Yet in this thing may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon - when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD please pardon your servant in this thing.”

Naaman was the King of Syria’s right-hand man. State business would require him to enter the Temple of Rimmon –

the false god of Syria. In his heart Naaman would be worshipping the God of Israel - but he wasn't sure how God would feel about his presence in a pagan temple. He asks for forgiveness in advance.

I like how Elisha *responds* – or better put, *doesn't respond*... “Then he said to him, **“Go in peace.”** Elisha doesn't let Naaman off the hook either way.

Certainly, idolatry is an abomination to God. But likewise Naaman could be a powerful influence for God in the position he occupied in the Syrian court.

Elisha leaves it to Naaman to **“work out (his) salvation with fear and trembling.”**

Rather than rely on pat answers, the prophet knows the Holy Spirit will lead him and guide him. Let's be careful not to reduce Christianity to a set of rules. It's a relationship that God wants with each of His children. *It's a walk that we walk!*

**“So he departed from him a short distance. But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, “Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him.” Gehazi saw the money. He followed the purse.**

**“So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, “Is all well?”**

**And he said, “All is well. My master has sent me, saying, ‘Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give**

them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.' "

So Naaman said, "Please, take two talents."

And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed them to two of his servants; and they carried them on ahead of him. When he came to the citadel, he took them from their hand, and stored them away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed."

Gehazi concocts a lie, and tells the rich Syrian that Elisha changed his mind. He has guests he needs to feed, and he could use a talent of silver.

Naaman gives him two talents, and Gehazi hides the loot in the tower.

There's one problem though with Gehazi's plan... You can't hide sin from God.

"Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, "Where did you go, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant did not go anywhere." He lies again. Lies beget lies. Tell one - and you have to tell another lie to cover up the first lie.

"Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants?"

Elisha's statement, "Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing..." Implies that Gehazi had a regular payday - but Gehazi wanted more.

Gehazi's problem was greed. Which has been the downfall

of many a minister.

There are three huge traps for a man in ministry. Billy Graham says steer clear of *the gold, the girls, and the glory*. All three can bring a ministry down like an ax laid to the trunk of tree. They yelled timber over Gehazi - may they never yell that over us. *The bucks, babes, and boasts belong to the Master, not the servant.*

In verse 27 Elisha finishes his chilling comments to Gehazi, "Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever."

And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow."

You could entitle chapter 6, "Whoops, I lost my head..." *an ax-head that is.*

"And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us. Please, let us go to the Jordan, and let every man take a beam from there, and let us make there a place where we may dwell."

So he answered, "Go." Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go." So he went with them."

And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees."

Understand, Elisha was not only *a prophet*, but also *a teacher*. He developed a network of schools where young men could study God's Word, and prophetic ministry. Branches of *Prophet U.* were in Bethel, and Gilgal, and Jericho.

And these schools were desperately needed. Elisha lived in a day of dark apostasy. These schools were lighthouses of truth in a pagan land.

Evidently, these prophet schools were quite popular. They'd run out of room. It was time for a campus expansion. So a group of students went with Elisha to the Jordan to fall a few trees. But their building project has an ominous start...

Verse 5, "As one was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! For it was borrowed." One of the guys is chopping away and a very valuable iron ax-head flies off into the river.

I'm sure all the golfers in the crowd can relate. You've been hacking and hacking all afternoon - and suddenly, an iron goes flying into the water...

Hey, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, iron implements of any kind were expensive, and hard to replace... And worse, this was a borrowed ax. It's got to be returned!

"So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place.

So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float. Therefore he said, "Pick it up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it."

Elisha throws a stick into the river where the ax-head sunk, and miraculously the iron floats to the surface. Today, modern man has found a way to make iron float. Just go down to the harbor and watch the Navy vessels come in and out.

If man can engineer it, then it shouldn't surprise us God has ways as well.

What Elisha did was perform **a miracle of retrieval**. He recovered what everyone thought was lost – and he did it by throwing a stick in the water.

Think of what's been lost in your life... you have rusted talents, a marriage on the rocks, a mind burned out on drugs, a heart that's lost its innocence. And what's worse – what you've lost was borrowed. They were all God's gifts.

God gave them to you to be used for His glory.

*On our own we were sunk...* until God tossed in a roughed-out piece of wood – a stick, in the form of a cross – and worked a miracle of retrieval. God redeemed the world. He has retrieved us, and all that we lost from sin and Satan (*our mind, our talents, our heart, our marriage*). He's raised us up from the depths.

Once during the Easter season a little boy noticed all the crosses on the front lawn of neighborhood churches. He asked his mom, **“Why all the plus signs?”**

The cross is a definite plus. Man was weighted down by sin – as heavy as iron.

Our retrieval seemed hopeless – we were spiritually sunk - until God tossed in the stick. Add the cross of Jesus - and the solution for sin becomes crystal clear. The weight of sin is removed. The load becomes light. What was lost is found.

In verse 8 the king of Syria is at war with Israel, *but the Israelis have a secret weapon*. **“Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, "My camp will be in such and such a place.”**

And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there." Then the king of Israel sent someone to the place of which the man of God had told him.

Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice.

Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?" Every time the Syrians make a strategic battle maneuver God revealed their whereabouts to Elisha. The King of Israel counters. The King of Syria suspects a traitor in his court. He calls a meeting to spy out the *spy!*

That's when the king's servants tells him, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." He can't whisper to his wife without Elisha knowing what he said.

When we visit the Golan Heights you can see on top of the mountains the high-tech surveillance equipment aimed at Damascus... Today, Israel still hears the king in his bedroom. But here's the ultimate in espionage - *Divine surveillance.*

I remember when our kids were little we had a baby monitor in our room. The family across the street also had an infant, and they too had a monitor. One day, my neighbor told me he had heard my wife and I on his baby monitor...

Evidently, he had picked up our frequency. That's a scary thought! But it's scarier to realize that *no conversation is hidden from the ears of God.*

Verse 13 “So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him." The King of Syria wants to arrest Elisha. “It was told him, saying, "Surely he is in Dothan." Dothan was just north of Israel’s capitol, Samaria. “Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city.” This is extraordinary effort to capture one man.

“And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots.” He was stunned.

“And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

The servant is coming unglued, while Elisha is as cool as the bottom of the pillow. “So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” Heaven had dispatched an angelic army to protect Elisha and his servant. It was the Syrians who were surrounded - not Elisha. Now the servant can see.

Listen to Psalm 34:7, “The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.” I’d imagine a few angels know your name.

So often people say that faith is blind - but to the contrary, the person of faith sees more than other people see. Secular eyes see only the physical and mental aspects of life – their



sight is two-dimensional. But spiritual eyes see 3-D – their vision includes the spiritual realm. Faith enables us to see the whole picture.

Eyes of faith enable us to see what *God is doing* in the given situation.

In verse 18 the Syrians move in to arrest Elisha, “So when the Syrians 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.”

What happens next is hilarious, “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.”

But he led them to Samaria.” ...right into the lap of the King of Israel. Elisha walks Israel’s blind enemy down Main St. and turns them over to the king.

“So it was, when they had come to 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 there they were, inside Samaria! Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?”

Remember Elijah was known for power and judgment. Elisha was the prophet of grace and mercy. Verse 22 “But he answered, “You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.”

Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate

and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel.” For the moment this show of mercy creates a peace.

But the peace was short-lived. Verse 24 “And it happened after this that Ben-Hadad king of Syria gathered all his army, and went up and besieged Samaria.”

Understand the military strategy behind a siege. Once you surrounded the city, and cut off its supply lines – it became a waiting game. If you were patient, and could wait until the supplies were exhausted you could starve the city to death.

This was what was happening inside the Israeli capitol. “And there was a great famine in Samaria; and indeed they besieged it until a donkey's head was sold for 80 shekels of silver, and one-fourth of a kab (a pint) of dove droppings for five shekels of silver.” This was a national disaster. Under normal circumstances a donkey’s head was considered unedible – yet it was being sold for 80 shekels.

A pint of dove-do was selling for 5 shekels of silver. *This was terrible!*

People were washing their cars - then parking them under a bird’s nest hoping some feathered friend would fly by and land a contribution on their windshield.

And it got worse. Verse 26 “Then, as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, “Help, my lord, O king!”

And he said, “If the LORD does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or from the

winepress?" He's being sarcastic.

But that's when the king gets a sense something is going on he couldn't have imagined. "The king said to her, "What is troubling you?" And she answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' "So we boiled my son, and ate him. And I said to her on the next day, 'Give your son, that we may eat him'; but she has hidden her son." The king is appalled. Women are boiling their babies - resorting to cannibalism.

"Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he tore his clothes; and as he passed by on the wall, the people looked, and there underneath he had sackcloth on his body." The king was desperate.

But look at the conclusion he draws. Rather than confess his sins, we're told, "Then he said, "God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today." He blames the tragedy on Elisha.

The king should've opened his Bible and read Deuteronomy 28:53. Moses predicted when the people disobey the Law, curses will come upon them.

And among those curses we find, "You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you."

"But Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him.

And the king sent a man ahead of him, but before the

messenger came to him, (Elisha) said to the elders, "Do you see how this son of a murderer (that was Elisha's description of the king) has sent someone to take away my head?"

Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door." Pin him between the door and the jam. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" The king will show up next. "And while he was still talking with them, there was the messenger, coming down to him; and then the king said, "Surely this calamity is from the LORD; why should I wait for the LORD any longer?"

Chapter 7, "Then Elisha said, "Hear the word of the LORD." And he makes a mind-boggling prediction. Never has a prophet gone this far out on a limb.

"Thus says the LORD: 'Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.' "

"A seah" was 8 gallons. "A shekel" was the Hebrew equivalent of 60 cents.

Understand, one pint of dove-do sells for 5 shekels... 24 hours later 8 gallons of fine flour, and 16 gallons of barley grain, will each sell for a single shekel.

How could such a dramatic turnaround happen in such a short time?

That was the conclusion of one of the king's officials... Verse 2, "An officer on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, "Look, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, could this thing be?" He scoffed at God's promise. *There was no way!* Here was his problem... "His

heart *wouldn't believe what his mind couldn't conceive.*" This is a huge stumbling block to faith.

As long as a person can see a way for God to work it out, they'll believe - but what happens when the promise seems impossible? Are we going to limit God to only what the flesh can't figure, and the mind can't muster? Hey, God is able to work outside the lines. Don't box Him in. He has means we know nothing about.

Elijah warns the king's scoffing servant that God will get the last laugh. He tells him, "In fact, you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it."

Well, the Lord works a miracle in a most unexpected way.

Verse 3 "Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; 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. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." God starts to work a miracle and He begins with four lepers *who've got nothing to lose.*

"And 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 - the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!" Therefore they arose and

fled at twilight, and left the camp intact - their tents, their horses, and their donkeys - and they fled for their lives.” God fooled the Syrians. He created an illusion. The Syrians thought they were *under attack* – they thought Israel had hired mercenaries to fight for them.

Syria panicked and split - and left tables full of food. Supplies were stocked.

“And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried from it silver and gold and clothing, and went and hid them; then they came back and entered another tent, and carried some from there also, and went and hid it.” They’ve hit the jackpot - won the lottery.

But that’s when it dawns on them there are thousands of hungry people to consider. Verse 9 “They said to one another, “We are not doing what is right.

This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household.” So they went and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, saying, “We went to the Syrian camp, and surprisingly no one was there, not a human sound - only horses and donkeys tied, and the tents intact.”

And the gatekeepers called out, and they told it to the king's household inside.

So the king arose in the night and said to his servants, “Let me now tell you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we are hungry; therefore they have gone out of the camp

to hide themselves in the field, saying, 'When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.' "

And one of his servants answered and said, "Please, let several men take five of the remaining horses which are left in the city. Look, they may either become like all the multitude of Israel that are left in it; or indeed, I say, they may become like all the multitude of Israel left from those who are consumed; so let us send them and see." He draws the leper's conclusion... *what have we got to lose!*

Therefore they took two chariots with horses; and the king sent them in the direction of the Syrian army, saying, "Go and see." And they went after them to the Jordan; and indeed all the road was full of garments and weapons which the Syrians had thrown away in their haste. So the messengers returned and told the king. Then the people went out and plundered the tents of the Syrians."

And remember the prediction of Elisha, "So a seah of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD."

*And I wonder what happened to the official who scoffed at God's promise?*

Verse 17 "Now the king had appointed the officer on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate." The scoffer was the gatekeeper. Not a good job to have when you're between the tables of cooked food and desperately starving people.

"But the people trampled him in the gate, and he died, just as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him. So it happened just as the man of God had

spoken to the king, saying, "Two seahs of barley for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour for a shekel, shall be sold tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria." Then that officer had answered the man of God, and said, "Now look, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?" And he had said, "In fact, you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it." And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate, and he died."

Beware... Limit God to what is humanly possible - or personally conceivable - and you'll miss out on many of His blessings. "Faith expands the possibilities."