

JUNE 24

2 Kings 6-7

More amazing, miraculous stories of a people ignoring their God.

2 Kings 6

Vs. 1-7 God tended to small things. Apparently these groups of prophets were like disciples who were trained and sent out through Israel to teach the people. This training center, where Elisha was, needed additional space. Since this place and time was very primitive and impoverished, the loss of an axe head was a big deal; but it was no problem if you had Elisha there.

The point here is that the king and all the people could have sought God and Elisha for all sorts of things, but they didn't. Israel could have been a paradise and the godliest nation on earth. We saw a glimpse of that under Solomon and it could have happened here, just for the asking; but for that to happen, sin, that inner hatred for God, would have to be conquered. They didn't want God. And remember, we still have that poison in our spirit, but thankfully its power has been broken by our Lord. We have a new spiritual life in us, and we have the indwelling Spirit, thanks to what Jesus did for us. This is also why we share this message in the harvest, to reach those whom God is seeking to save and free from this sin.

Vs. 8-23 God tends to huge things. What is interesting to me is that the Syrians found out about it, and it made them do something. Israel was being given help and information from God, yet they were still worshipping Baal and the calves.

Vs. 15-17 Do you remember what Elisha saw when Elijah was taken? He understood that this army was always present. His prayer to God was not to send the army, but for God to open the eyes of his new servant to spiritual reality. To me this is the part of the story that I'm convicted by. I need to see every situation spiritually, instead of letting my vision, head and mood get in the way.

So, why wasn't Israel following God? It is the amazing power of sin.

V. 23 Notice that this brought peace only for a while, and all it did was to stop the raids into the land. War was still coming, as nations with military might were rising and considering building empires. Israel could have turned to the Lord.

Vs. 24-33 The location of the chapter break is unfortunate. This was Ben-hadad, the same king involved in the last story. As a result of not turning to God, Joram and Israel were given one of the curses pronounced in the law.

Vs. 30-33 Notice that the king was humbling himself "incognito." Instead of openly showing repentance and humiliation to Yahweh before the people, he hid the sackcloth under his clothes. He wasn't leading the people in prayer and repentance. All of the superficial spirituality seen in these chapters ought to be alarming to us, because we are capable of the same thing today. We can kind of worship God and kind of worship everything else too, just like they did. We can be blessed by God and not follow Him except the way we want to follow.

Isn't it interesting that the king blamed God and then wanted to kill Elisha? He didn't see that this kind of siege and famine was promised in detail in Deuteronomy if the nation worshiped idols. It was a good thing that God gave Elisha spiritual sight and power to predict. They held the door long enough to await the arrival of the king. Notice that Elisha is sitting with the elders, possibly praying. That's where the king should have been.

V. 33 is filled with all sorts of spiritual irony and blindness.

2 Kings 7

This event will be similar to God saving Jerusalem under Hezekiah, but under Hezekiah's leadership the entire city was praying. Here we see God, in mercy, trying to lead the people to repentance since the people were not really following God.

Vs. 1-2 So why did God decide to solve this dire situation now? He could have done this at any time. It finally occurred to me today that this is probably the first time the king came to Elisha regarding the siege and the famine. It seems they would rather deal with the hardship themselves than go to the real God and His prophet. We still do that today and it is still just as tragic.

V. 2 This verse has always been a warning to me never to doubt what God can do.

Vs. 3-15 Leprosy was a symbolic physical disease that represented sin. It is ironic then that God used four lepers to spread the good news.

V. 6 God can make things happen so easily. All He did here to route this army was to make the sounds of an army. With the added fear and paranoia of thinking the Egyptians were coming, they left so quickly in panic that they left everything behind. They didn't even untie their animals. What they left behind was like a Walmart © Superstore.

For us as disciples, we should be seeking to understand God and His working on a spiritual level. This life isn't about us, it is about the redemption of mankind. Knowing that God can make things happen easily, ironically, should give us peace when He doesn't do things quickly, knowing He could, but has chosen not to. It is His inscrutable plan and His unknowable wisdom, not ours. It should be our joy to follow, watch and learn in the harvest.

Vs. 16-20 I think it is safe to say that the point of this event is hinted at by the length of this explanation. And since the nation didn't turn to God, figuratively speaking, the people were being trampled to death by their own sin and unbelief.

Acts 15:36-16:15

Acts 15:36-41

People often ask who was right here. I think God was right in separating Paul and Barnabas. What is interesting is that He chose to separate them through a strong disagreement based on their convictions. The strength of this disagreement is shown in that they couldn't and wouldn't compromise. Paul would head into trouble and get beaten to a pulp, like usual, and he was right in not taking Mark. Barnabas was right in taking Mark to restore him and mentor him. I think they parted as friends. In fact, we know they remained friends through references by Paul and by Luke. Also, some of Paul's final words have a request for Timothy to bring Mark to help him in prison. Unlike Luke, Mark had been an eyewitness of some of what Jesus had done; and by the time of Paul's last days, Mark had written the first Gospel and was a proven missionary and leader.

Our ideas of unity and tolerance need to be as wide as God's will. God is responsible for this irreconcilable difference. It was His way of forming two teams for two different missions. We need to love and respect one another, but we definitely don't need to agree with one another if the Lord has given us a strong conviction.

Notice this parting was by mutual agreement. I have often seen churches force staff out of the church and say it was a "Paul and Barnabas" thing. How silly and dishonest. Of course, it is also true, that if the Lord has given someone a different vision, if that person creates problems with it, he needs to leave or be urged to go. Again, it all comes down to recognizing what the Lord is doing, and sometimes He will lead people to part.

V. 39 Notice that Barnabas took Mark back to the place where he had deserted Paul and Barnabas on the first journey. I wonder if Barnabas took him back there to help him through something. Actually, in Barnabas going to Cyprus and Paul going north through Syria, they were working together, covering more ground.

Acts 16:1-15

Vs. 1-5 From things Paul says in 1 and 2 Timothy, he apparently led Timothy to Christ on his first trip. On returning, Timothy had grown in faith and was a strong servant. It is likely that Timothy was in his 20s. So, if Paul was this guy who didn't think that circumcision was necessary for salvation, and if he was the apostle to the Gentiles, why did he circumcise Timothy? I think it had to do with his strategy as expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:19ff. A circumcised Timothy could go anywhere and would not put a stumbling block in front of anyone. An uncircumcised Timothy could not enter a synagogue, and the Jews would have never heard a word.

It is interesting that even Christians tend to exalt individualism, rather than being a disciple in the harvest. A disciple focused on following Christ in the harvest is supposed to be able to blend in for the sake of seeing others saved and follow Christ, and not to put anything unnecessary in the way of the gospel. Blending into a culture often means putting our preferences aside and choosing not to do things we could do if we wanted. In the case above, Paul put Timothy in a place where he could minister to both groups, not just one.

Vs. 6-10 Getting a map of Paul's missionary journeys will help here. You probably have one in the back of your "regular" Bible. Apparently, Paul asked for guidance on where to go and received it, in the form of a "no." So, why did God say "no?" I don't know, but I do know that going to Troas was a "lucky" break for the ailing Paul.

Vs. 11-15 Did you notice the change in narration in v. 10? Apparently Troas is where Paul and Luke met. Since Paul spent little time in Troas and we hear of no church being planted there, Luke must already have been a believer and follower. He was already a disciple willing to work with Paul. Since Luke was a doctor, he might have gone with Paul as his personal physician. As we've seen and will see, cuts, bruises, beatings, a thorn and maybe even blindness also followed Paul around.

V. 13 Was there a synagogue in Philippi? Apparently not. The Bible Knowledge Commentary-NT, p. 399, says they needed 10 Jewish males to begin a synagogue. Even if they had those 10 males, they might not have had the permission to open a synagogue. Philippi was a very Roman city, populated by former Roman soldiers, and the Jews didn't have a strong influence there. However, Paul found a place where Jews and God-fearing Gentiles gathered for prayer. God opened the doors of hearts here. Tomorrow He will open iron doors and more hearts. It is interesting to stop here and consider that this church will be closest to Paul's heart and a partner with him in the harvest. Tomorrow we'll continue to see how the church at Philippi began.

Psalm 142

Waiting on the Lord is the norm and the rule, not the exception. He trains us to set our hearts on Him and to seek a deeper, spiritual help and resource in Him.

Vs. 1-2 This is how David lived for those ten years when he ran from Saul.

Vs. 3-4 Even though David was surrounded by followers and friends, 600 of them, at the core, he learned that he could only depend on the Lord.

Vs. 5-7 Even in his distress, David knew that there was a purpose God was working and that others would be strengthened by the way David depended on the Lord and how God would deliver him.

Proverbs 17:24-25

Paul told Timothy to train himself in godliness, practicing in all circumstances how to honor God. That is a constant mindset and requires concentration in all circumstances. It is a focused pursuit and I think it would qualify as seeking to grow in wisdom. I think Timothy was a wise son.