

## Lesson 12     20 October 2013

### Syria Wars Against Israel

**Lesson Scope:** 2 Kings 6 and 7

#### Lesson Focus

Because of King Solomon's excesses with false gods and strange women, God raised up adversaries (1 Kings 11:1-25). One of those adversaries was Syria, which had a king who "abhorred Israel." This legacy resulted in frequent confrontations between Syria and the Northern Kingdom.

Despite Israel's idolatrous kings (Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram), a grass-roots movement spread an awareness of the true God among the people. Elisha taught schools of prophets who influenced the land. God also gave Elisha supernatural insights and miracle-working power to protect Israel.

This lesson opens with conflict between Israel and Syria. Syria was frustrated at being defeated before they even joined battle. Later, when Israel suffered severely at Syria's hands, the king was blind to the true cause for their chastening. He blamed Elisha and even God for their troubles (2 Kings 6:31-33). But God was merciful and gave them victory, just as Elisha had prophesied.

In the first account, we see God's sovereign protection.

A nonresistant response to the attackers was used. Elisha returned good for evil to "heap coals of fire" (Romans 12:20). They fed the Syrian host a good meal, and "the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel" (6:23). That campaign was ended.

Later, when Syria besieged Samaria, God provided for His people directly from the enemy's stores. God controls all the goods of the earth. "The cattle upon a thousand hills" are His (Psalm 50:10). The wicked gather for the righteous (Ecclesiastes 2:26; Job 27:16-17). "The meek shall inherit the earth" (Psalm 37:11).

God's ability to provide victory for His people is unlimited. Therefore, as we take God's way, we can be "more than conquerors."

**Lesson Aim:** To see why victory is certain when we are on God's side.

**Theme Verse:** [1 John 4:4](#). Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

## Lesson Text

### Syria Confounded

[2 Kings 6:8-17](#) <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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? <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. <sup>15</sup> 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? <sup>16</sup> And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them. <sup>17</sup> 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.

### Israel Tested

[2 Kings 6:24-25](#) <sup>24</sup> And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria. <sup>25</sup> 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.

[2 Kings 7:1](#) <sup>1</sup> Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time *shall* a measure of fine flour *be sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

## Victory Provided

**2 Kings 7:3-9** <sup>3</sup> And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? <sup>4</sup> If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine *is* in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. <sup>5</sup> And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, *there was* no man there. <sup>6</sup> For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, *even* the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. <sup>7</sup> Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, *even* the camp as it *was*, and fled for their life. <sup>8</sup> And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid *it*; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence *also*, and went and hid *it*. <sup>9</sup> Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day *is* a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

**2 Kings 7:16** <sup>16</sup> And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was *sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

## Questions for Study

### Syria Confounded

1. Who was confounding the Syrian king?
2. What does the Syrian servant's knowledge of Elisha and his work tell us?
3. What can we learn from Elisha's servant's experience in 2 Kings 6:17?

### Israel Tested

4. How is the Christian sustained in times of hardship and tragedy?
5. What should prophecies of future blessings do for us?

## Victory Provided

6. How does famine-stricken Samaria portray sinful humanity?
7. How can experiences of being near death change one's perspective?
8. What does 7:16 reveal about God's ability to provide?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

This "king of Syria" (2 Kings 6:8) was likely the Ben-hadad whom Ahab had befriended, when God had him "appointed to utter destruction." Israel would now experience the consequences of Ahab's error (1 Kings 20:42).

"Saved himself there, not once nor twice" (2 Kings 6:10) means that the king of Israel did escape harm at least three times.

The Syrian king suspected that there was a traitor among his own men (2 Kings 6:11), but that was not the case. Rather, Elisha was being warned by his all-knowing God.

"Alas, my master! how shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15). The army of the Syrians struck fear into Elisha's servant. But Elisha's prayer unveiled the presence of God's much greater host with chariots of fire. Spirit forces are protecting God's people, but they are normally invisible.

2 Kings 6:25-29 details the severe distress Samaria was in from the siege. Elisha gave a seemingly impossible prophecy (2 Kings 7:1).

The lepers (7:3) lived outside the city according to the regulations for the unclean (Leviticus 13:46). "We do not well" (2 Kings 7:9) reveals that the lepers' consciences did not allow them to neglect their moral responsibility to their fellow men. A sense of guilt made them fear divine judgment.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Syria Confounded**

1. The forces of evil are intent on destroying God's people (2 Kings 6:8). The conflict of the ages between God and Satan is ongoing. The main battleground for men's loyalties is in their minds. Satan uses every means that he is allowed to corrupt men's minds, destroy their bodies, and bring them under divine wrath. If we become careless or indifferent, we will certainly become victims of his devices.

2. God faithfully warns His people of the enemy's tactics (2 Kings 6:10). The Bible gives many illustrations not only of those who have stood faithful to God but also of those who have fallen. Satan's tactics remain basically the same. He appeals to "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). "We are not ignorant of his devices."

3. The hosts of heaven far outnumber the forces of evil (2 Kings 6:16). God's army of angels has not been, cannot be, and never will be defeated. Even though the angels are invisible, they are ever present and ready to aid the faithful. Knowing this allows us to have peace and confidence even in dire circumstances.

4. God reveals His power, to strengthen and encourage His people (2 Kings 6:17). Those who walk with God are blessed with manifestations of His presence and goodwill. How often have we received unmistakable answers to prayer? Retaining those occasions in our memory, along with meditating on Bible accounts of deliverance, will energize us for spiritual battles today.

### **Israel Tested**

5. Faith in God's message of hope provides strength and victory (2 Kings 7:1).

The Bible gives us many glorious and precious promises throughout the Old Testament, in the Gospels, and in the writings of the apostles. These promises are reserved only for those who believe. "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:6-7).

### **Victory Provided**

6. Gaining the victory requires deliberate action (2 Kings 7:3-5). This is where Satan defeats many. We may know what we should do—but fail to do it. Choosing God's way may cost us money or invite the ridicule of others. It requires crucifying the flesh and may require enduring pain and hard work. But the rewards lie beyond those obstacles—first the battle, then the victory.

7. God can easily make the enemies flee (2 Kings 7:6-7). "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" is not a suggestion or a fantasy; it is a promise. "Jesus never fails" is not a Biblical quote, but it captures the essence of an immutable truth. In our spiritual battles, we do not know how God will work for us; but like the three Hebrews threatened with the fiery furnace, we resolve to do what is right and leave the results to Him.

8. The faithful share the abundant provisions of God with those in need (2 Kings 7:8-9). "This day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace" has motivated many to share the Gospel with their perishing neighbors. Many who have been introverts, keeping salvation to themselves, have lost it in worldliness or dead formalism.

9. When we follow God, His message of hope becomes our experience (2 Kings 7:16). "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits" (2 Timothy 2:6). When we exercise ourselves in Christian service by meeting the needs of those around us, speaking to others about the Christian life, and passing out Gospel literature, we grow in Christ ourselves.

## **Important Teachings**

1. The forces of evil are intent on destroying God's people (6:8).
2. God faithfully warns His people of the enemy's tactics (6:10).
3. The hosts of heaven far outnumber the forces of evil (6:16).
4. God reveals His power, to strengthen and encourage His people (6:17).
5. Faith in God's message of hope provides strength and victory (7:1).
6. Gaining the victory requires deliberate action (7:3-5).
7. God can easily make the enemies flee (7:6-7).
8. The faithful share the abundant provisions of God with those in need (7:8-9).
9. When we follow God, His message of hope becomes our experience (7:16).
10. God clearly knows the strategies of our enemy (6:11-12).

## **Answers to Questions**

1. Who was confounding the Syrian king?

The Syrian king was confounded by God, who knows all things. He was confounded by the people who were given supernatural insight, and he was confounded by the king of Israel, who avoided his camp.

2. What does the Syrian servant's knowledge of Elisha and his work tell us?

The power of Israel's God and His prophets was well-known among the nations. Only when Israel served idols, as Israel's kings did, could they be defeated (Lamentations 2:15-17).

3. What can we learn from Elisha's servant's experience in 2 Kings 6:17?

In dangers and trials, we may be perplexed, but we should not despair (2 Corinthians 4:8-10). As we walk with God, tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope (Romans 5:3-5).

4. How is the Christian sustained in times of hardship and tragedy?

Christians are sometimes delivered, but at other times they must suffer (Hebrews 11:35). The ungodly also suffer, but without hope (Ephesians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). Hardship purifies believers, and Jesus makes their grief bearable. We also look forward to an eternal inheritance in heaven with God.

5. What should prophecies of future blessings do for us?

We should not be fearful but should rest in God's care (Psalm 37:5). Believing God's promises is sometimes the only hope saints have to hold on to.

6. How does famine-stricken Samaria portray sinful humanity?

The people were desperately hungry and miserable. They lived in fear of imminent attack by the Syrians, who would kill the people and destroy the city. They were utterly without hope. They did not realize that God was nearby and would help if they repented.

7. How can experiences of being near death change one's perspective?

When the pleasures of life and people's personal pursuits are taken away, they are forced to face reality. They realize how weak and vulnerable they really are, and how quickly they could be hurled into eternity.

8. What does 7:16 reveal about God's ability to provide?

God is able to do whatever He says He will do. Even in humanly impossible circumstances, He is able to provide more than we need.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

The two accounts in this lesson show God's ability to protect and provide when people have a simple, complete faith in Him. The three Hebrews standing before Nebuchadnezzar said, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.... But if not.... we will not serve thy gods" (Daniel 3:17-18).

Paul said, "In nothing I shall be ashamed, but ... Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Philippians 1:20). Either way, God always delivers His children.

### **Research Guide**

1. Spirit forces surround and protect the righteous (see Psalm 34:7; Daniel 10:12-21; Matthew 18:10; 1 Corinthians 11:10; Hebrews 1:14).

2. A chariot of fire was present when Elijah went up to heaven (2 Kings 2:11).

3. The desperate situation described in 2 Kings 6:28-29 was prophesied in the curses upon Israel for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:56-57). Mocking God's words that are revealed through His prophets will not go unpunished (2 Peter 3:3-7).