

# Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 20, Part 1

## 2 Kings 6-8, Part 1

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Hello, we're continuing our study of the books of Kings. We're in 2 Kings. We've been looking during the past several sessions at the ministries of Elijah and Elisha as they combated the prevalence of Baal worship in the northern kingdom of Israel and as they sought to maintain the ministry, the prevalence, the power, the glory of Yahweh.

And we're continuing today with a study of Elisha's ongoing ministry of deliverance. That's in chapters 6 and 7 and the first verses of chapter 8.

Let's pray as we begin. Heavenly Father, we thank you that all of history is in your command.

We thank you that all things that occur are not a surprise to you. Thank you that you see the whole sweep of time. Thank you that you are at work, at work to heal, at work to redeem, at work to deliver.

Thank you. Your intention is to bless us if we meet just the barest conditions. And as we look back across human history, we see that that's the case. Thank you.

Help us now as we look at your book. By the power of the Holy Spirit, let us understand more deeply, more fully, more livingly what it is you have to say to us. Let these not be merely words on a page, but let them be words of fire written on our hearts. In your name we pray with thanksgiving, Amen.

At the end of the last session, we saw how the scripture says that the Syrians ceased their raiding upon Israel.

That was in chapter 6, verse 23. Now, in chapter 6, verse 24, we read that Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, mobilized his entire army and marched up and laid siege to Samaria. So, we don't know. Is this as a year has passed or more? Or are we dealing with materials that are in theological order and not chronological order? My guess is that, in fact, what the earlier passage was saying was that there were no more raiders, the raid to this place and the raid to that place.

But now Ben-Hadad has decided he's going to try to come and capture the capital city of Israel and just be done with the whole thing. So he comes and lays siege. The same thing happened before Ahab.

And here it is again. And a siege in a city was a terrible, terrible experience. Usually, the cities had an adequate supply of water, which was absolutely essential.

But sooner or later, if the siege continued over any length of time, the food was going to run out. And that's the picture that we see here. So that we're told a donkey's head sold for 80 shekels.

Now, we're told in the book of Leviticus that a male slave was sold for 50 shekels. And we know from the book of Hosea that Hosea bought his wife back on the slave block for 15 shekels. But here, a donkey's head is worth 80 shekels.

So, we see something of the tragedy that is occurring here. The king is walking on the wall, and he's accosted by a woman, and she asks him to help her. His response in verse 27 is very interesting.

If the Lord doesn't help you, where can I get help for you? From the threshing place? From the wine press? A word of despair. We saw that earlier in chapter 3 when this king, Jehoram, said, well since we're out of the water, it's obviously God who brought us here to destroy us. We're going to see a similar kind of attitude later.

Where does that come from? Why do we assume that God is out to get us? In my experience, it's a result of sin. When sin has separated me from God, it's very easy for the enemy to come whispering around and say, yeah, he's out to get you. He's out to make your life hard.

He's out to make things tough for you. But when our relationship with him is whole and well and clean, we know he's not out to get us. He's out to bless us.

He's not out to make our life tough. He's out to make it easier. He's on our side.

But it's when sin has come in and separated us from him that we are then likely to say, oh, he's out to get me. Yeah, these bad things have happened to me because he's after me. That's the devil talking.

And he's been talking here to this king. The woman tells him a terrible story. We two, I and my neighbor, we agreed to eat our children.

And so, we ate mine, but now she's hidden hers from me. Help me. Does this remind you of something? Does it remind you of the story of Solomon and the two prostitutes? I think it's intentional.

There, you see God-given wisdom to deal with the problem. Here, the king says, I can't do anything about that. I think we see here between 1 King 11 and 2 Kings 6

that we're seeing something of a tragic decline as a result of Solomon's sin and all that has followed since that time.

When the king heard the woman's words, verse 30, he tore his robes. As he went along the wall, the people looked, and they saw that under his robes, he had sackcloth on his body. Hmm.

Burlap bags. That's often a mark of repentance, but his next words are not the words of a repentant sinner. He said, may God deal with me, be it ever so severely.

Here's an oath. He's swearing. May God damn me if the head of Elisha's son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today.

What? What? It's Elisha's fault. Isn't that interesting? How often, when we're in trouble, we're looking for somebody else to blame. Well, Jehoram, maybe it's your fault.

Maybe you have not been faithful to Yahweh the way you should have been. No, no, it's Elisha's fault. What does Elisha have to do with all this? Anyhow, it's Ben-Hadad who's come and besieged them, but there it is.

There it is. It's her fault. It's their fault.

It's his fault. Never mind. Never the place for me to fall on my face and say, Lord, is it I? And to hear his voice saying, yes, as a matter of fact, it is.

What do I need to do? But how easily do we blame somebody else for the trouble? Now, Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. The king sent a messenger ahead.

But before he arrived, Elisha said to the elders, don't you see how this murderer is sending someone to cut off my head? Years earlier, Ahaziah had the very same reaction when he sent Beelzebub, the god of the flies, down to the Philistine city of Ekron to ask if his son was going to survive. Elijah met his messengers and said, is there no god in Israel that you have to go to a foreign country to inquire? And what was Ahaziah's reaction? Kill Elijah. Capture him.

Kill him. We don't want to hear God's word when we're living in defiance of him, do we? We don't want to have the true prescription written for us. We want to blame somebody else.

We want to blame God for our problems. When the messenger comes, shut the door, hold it shut against him. Isn't that the sound of his master's footsteps behind him? Yes.

You don't want to mess with a who knows what you're doing before you do it. But somehow, these folks never quite got that picture. If you're going to kill Elisha, Elisha knows you're going to kill him.

And Elisha may do something about it. While he was talking to them, the messenger came down to him. Now, notice we shift gears here.

The king said, now, I think this is something the king said to himself. But it may be something that he said to the messenger to tell him. We don't quite know.

The king said, here it is again. This disaster is from the Lord. Why should I wait for the Lord any longer? Now, if you've been with me through this entire session, or group of sessions, the study, you know something that I've said again and again: in Hebrew, the word wait is a synonym for trust. So, what is he saying? This disaster is from the Lord.

So why should I trust him to save me? Here again, you see, Yahweh is out to get me. So, I'm not going to trust him to deliver me. Ben-Hadad is here besieging our city, putting us in this terrible, terrible situation.

Because Yahweh sent him. So, I'm not going to trust Yahweh. Friends, we need to think our way through these kinds of situations.

The Bible does not tell us that Yahweh sent Ben-Hadad. He may have, but the Bible doesn't tell us that.

It simply says Ben-Hadad decided aggressively to attack his neighbor. So that's number one. Don't be too sure when difficulties come to you that God sent them.

But I've said before, and I want to say it again: nothing happens to us that doesn't come to us by Yahweh's permission. Yahweh is not sitting in heaven saying, oh, my, look at that. Oh, I didn't expect they'd do that.

Well, now I wonder how they're going to get out of that. No, no. On the other hand, we should not think that God says Oswald needs a broken arm.

I'm going to break his arm for him. That's not our God. When we experience trouble, first of all, don't automatically blame God for it.

But second, know that if it has happened to you, it has happened with his permission, and he can carry you through it. So, Joram is saying, well, Yahweh sent Ben-Hadad, and I'm not going to trust Yahweh anymore. Well, wait a minute.

If Yahweh did send it, what would his purpose be? Well, his purpose was to destroy us. No, no, no. God's purpose is never to destroy us.

His purpose is to cleanse us, to refine us, to bring us to repentance, to turn us around. Yes, this is the moment. Lord, if you sent this man against us if you sent this trouble, then Lord, how do you want to deliver us? How do you want to work in our lives? How do you want to bring us to repentance and change? But that was never in his head.

Kill the messenger. Have you been there? Are you there? Are you in trouble? Don't blame Yahweh. Trust him that whether he caused it or permitted it, he can bring you through it, if you will, turn back to him. Allow him to give you his prescription for your condition and allow you to come into the broad uplands of new life. That's why Jesus came.

So that God's power would have no limits in our lives. So, Elisha replied, hear the word of the Lord. This is chapter seven, verse one.

This is what the Lord says: about this time tomorrow, a sea of the finest flour will sell for one shekel. Think a bushel and two bushels of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria. And now we see who the king had surrounded himself with.

The officer on whose arm the king was leaning said to the man of God, look, even if Yahweh would open the floodgates of heaven, which he would not, of course, because he's out to get us, could this happen? You will see it with your own eyes, answered Elisha, but you will not eat any of it. Oh my. When God makes a promise to you, believe it, don't question it.

When God offers to you his new life, oh, take it. You say he couldn't do that. That's not possible.

My life is a mess. I'm in ruins. God couldn't do that.

Oh, friends, he can. He can. Across the millennia, the stories of the ways in which God has taken broken, ruined lives, and restored them are myriad.

Believe him. Oh, Yahweh couldn't do that. Yes, he could. Believe it.