

## Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 20, Part 2

### 2 Kings 6-8, Part 2

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And now we want to look at deliverance comes. One of the interesting questions to ask in a scriptural narrative like this is the question of proportion. Why is a lot of space given to some incidents and hardly any space given to others? Years pass in a few verses, and on the other hand, the better part of two chapters is given to this story of Ben-Hadad's sieging of Samaria and then Samaria's deliverance.

Why is that? Well, I'll tell you, I don't know. The Bible doesn't answer the question for us, but that doesn't prohibit us from thinking about it. And in fact, we should think about questions that the Bible may not directly answer.

Why so much attention to this story? I suggest to you, and when we get to heaven we'll find out whether I'm right or not, but I suggest to you that the reason this particular incident gets so much attention is precisely over these issues of trusting Yahweh, He wants to do good for me. The king did not believe that. Turning to Yahweh for His solution, they didn't want to do that.

Believing Yahweh when He says impossible things and then the marvel of God doing His work through the most unlikely people. I think God wants to underline those lessons in this story and thus tell it in such marvelous detail. So, we're told there were four men with a contagious skin disease.

Now, I've said before, again, this is almost certainly not Hansen's disease, which we call leprosy today. Actually, on the basis of scripture, because Hansen's disease is a terrible skin disease by which the nerve endings die and you lose the extremities of your body, your fingers, your toes, your nose, your ears—terrible, terrible thing.

But to the best of our knowledge, it is a relatively recent disease that appeared in Egypt in the second century AD. But this is a contagious skin disease of some sort, and so these people are castaways. Now, as I mentioned in the handout, the gate in Israelite cities at this time, if you're looking down on it from on top, was laid out in this sort of a plan.

At each of these points, there were doors, gates, and heavy wooden doors that were barred. So, it's a kind of a failsafe deal. If the enemy breaks through one, they've still got two more to go.

And there were suicide troops in these bays here who were willing to attack. The thing was roofed over, and in the roof, there were holes, murder holes, through which you could shoot arrows down onto these enemy troops who had gotten

through. So, we're told these men, these four guys who had been cast out, were at the entrance of the city gate.

Now, I suspect that, in fact, they're inside one of those guard rooms. I think if they were actually all the way outside the gateway, the Syrians would have already killed them. So, I think that they are sheltering in one of those guard rooms.

And they say this is crazy. If we stay in here, we're going to die. We're going to die of starvation.

On the other hand, who knows? Maybe the Syrians would take pity on us. I mean, we can't lose. We're going to die if we stay here, and maybe we'll live if we go there.

So, let's go—the least likely people in the community. I don't believe for a moment that's an accident because that's the story of the Bible.

God uses unlikely people. Oh, thank God for those who are brilliant. Thank God for those who are gifted.

Thank God for those who are competent. But again and again, their brilliance, their gifting, their confidence, and their competence get in the way. Who did this? Well, I did, you dum-dum.

So, the Bible says not many noble, not many wise are chosen. Why? Because God doesn't like them. No, he loves them.

He'd love to use those people. But again and again, he can't because they're in the way. But for those who are not able, who, like these guys, have nothing to lose, why shouldn't I throw myself on God? It can't get worse, and it might get better.

And God says that's good enough. Are you one of those? Are you one of those who says God couldn't use me? I'm not bright, I'm not smart, I'm not gifted. So what? God can use you.

God can accomplish his great purposes through you. Years ago, I saw a cartoon, it was in two frames. In the first frame, this big guy, big, big guy is leaning over the front of the desk and threatening the guy who's behind the desk.

Well, the guy behind the desk is actually a little taller than this big guy. And the guy behind the desk is saying, yeah, you and who else? In the second frame, you come around to the other side of the desk, and you see that the guy behind the desk is standing in two of the drawers that he's pulled out. Yeah, you plus God are the majority.

Will you let him? Will you let him use, as in the story of Jesus, your two fish and five loaves? God loves to do that. And I'm confident that's what's going on here. So these guys go out, and they discover something astonishing.

The Syrian camp is empty. And we're told, verse five, when they reached the edge of the camp, for Yahweh had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, look, the King of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us. So, they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys.

They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives. Now, we might look at that and say, well, that's kind of fanciful. I mean, that doesn't happen.

Oh, yes, it does. Yes, it does. We, looking back on the year 2020, have seen how mobs can be formed in a minute.

And once they're formed, they're pretty well ungovernable. People do things in a mob that they would never think of doing by themselves. So, the idea of mob psychology operating here in the Syrian army is not at all far-fetched.

And that's what happened. So, here's this whole camp empty. And these guys say, wow.

They entered one of the tents and ate and drank. This is verse eight. Then they took silver, gold, and clothes and went off and hid them.

They returned and entered another tent, took some things from it, and hid them. Ooh, wow. But then they said, wait a minute, wait a minute.

What we're doing is not right. This is a day of good news, and we're keeping it to ourselves. Well, there is an altruistic motivation, isn't it? But then look at what else they say.

If we wait till daylight, punishment will overtake us. There's another motive. Oh, brother, if they come out of the city in the morning and find that camp is empty and we're out here drunk as toads, it's not going to go well for us.

Let's go at once and report this. To the royal palace. Yes.

Mixed motives. Have you ever experienced that? We do some things for the very best motives, and we do some other things for selfish motives. What I want to say out of this story is, the question is, did you do the right thing? Once again, our enemy, who is rightly called the accuser, can do this to us.

We do something, something that is right. And he says, oh, yeah, yeah, but you did it for all the wrong motives. And we say, oh, wow.

And we get down, get down on ourselves. But we did the right thing. That's what God is concerned with.

He wants us to be motivated by selflessness, absolutely. But he wants us to do the right thing. And if you do the right thing because you're afraid of getting caught doing the wrong thing, well, you did the right thing.

And in our society, we need more of us who will say, I'm going to do the right thing. What's happening tragically is, we used to do the right thing for the right reasons. Why do I obey the speed limit? Well, because it's the right thing to do.

And I, who love God, who made laws and made governments, I want to do the right thing. Now, you see, there are not enough policemen in the world to make us do the right thing if there's not that inner motivation to obey God. That's what we see around the world.

That's what has made America different. I don't care how much people want to say, well, the founding fathers weren't really Christians, and most of the people in the United States weren't really Christians, and et cetera, et cetera. The fact is, most Americans for the last 200 years have been motivated by an inner motivation: I'm going to do what's right.

Where did that come from? It came from here; that's where it came from. Oh, they may not have known Jesus personally. They may not have been good churchgoers, but they have a whole long history that says there is a God, and God has made this world, and God has made this world to operate in certain ways, and God blesses those who will order their lives on his standards.

Now, we're losing it as fast as we can go. We're destroying it, tearing it down. And I say again, there are not enough police in the world to make you obey the law unless there is an inner motive that will enable you to do that.

So, these guys had mixed motives. Hey, it's not right for us to sit here feeding our faces when everybody else is in there in the city dying of starvation, and we're likely to get caught. What's your motive? What motivates you to do the right thing? So, they went and reported.

Now, look again at the king's reaction. Look again. I tell you what the Arameans have done to us.

This is verse 12. They know we're starving, so they've left the camp to hide in the countryside, thinking they will surely come out, then we'll take them alive and get into the city. Now, that's not impossible, but it's just so interesting that never once does he say, oh my, do you suppose Yahweh has delivered us? No.

That split between him and God in his relationship will not allow him to believe for a moment that God, who some people had trusted, had delivered them. No. No, he's got to believe.

Oh, it's a trick. It's a trap. And again, the story is played out in some detail.

Some of the guys say, well, we got a few horses left. This was a nation that had had some 2,000 chariots. We got a few horses left.

Let's get five horses and a couple of chariots and send them out and see what happens. I think they had to persuade the king to do that. No, no, it's awful.

It's hopeless. It's over. No, no.

We might as well just sit in here and die because of what God, well, let's try it. Well, okay, if you insist. Oh, oh, what a difference from the heart that says, I know a God who loves us, who in the midst of great difficulties is determined to save us.

I don't know how he's going to do it, but I know he is. And when it happens, there, see, it's the Lord. No, no.

No, it's the Arameans trying to trap us. How about you? How about me? Believing, trusting, confident of his love, nothing between my soul and the savior, as the old song says. That's where I want to live, don't you? Now, there are optimists and pessimists.

If my wife were here, she would tell you that I tend to be more pessimistic. There are personality differences among us, but the subtle attitude is: I know the Lord, and I know his purposes for us.

And I trust him that he is going to accomplish his good purposes in spite of everything. I don't care whether you're a congenital pessimist or a congenital optimist. That attitude can be your attitude and mine.

And so, the thing happened. And it's fascinating to me how much space is given to that closing incident. The king had put the officer on whose arm he leaned in charge of the gate.

Yeah. All those starving people had to come out through that gateway. All those people are crushing through.

This guy is somehow trying to control the mob, and they trample him. The officer had said, and he quotes it exactly here in verse 19, what he had said up in verse two. Why repeat it so precisely? Once again, I think the writer is making a point.

Get cynical about God, and there will come a day when your cynicism will come back to you full-blown. That's what happened. You'll see it with your own eyes.

You'll look out there. You'll look out here at the Assyrian camp, and you'll see people with a bushel of wheat trying to sell it for a shekel. You'll see it, but you won't get any of it.

Mm-mm. What's your choice? Are you going to be sweet and open and trusting and daring? Are you going to be the cynic? Ah, if God opened the windows of heaven, that couldn't happen. Yes, he could.

Yes, he could. Believe it.