

Dr. John Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 20.2, 2 Kings 6-8, Part 2 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 20.2, 2 Kings 6-8, Part 2, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Oswalt's lecture focuses on the biblical narrative in 2 Kings 6-8, specifically Ben-Hadad's siege of Samaria and its subsequent deliverance. He explores why this story receives so much attention in scripture, suggesting it highlights the importance of trusting Yahweh even in seemingly impossible situations. **Oswalt emphasizes how God often uses unlikely individuals to accomplish his purposes, such as the four men with a contagious skin disease who discover the abandoned Syrian camp.** The lecture examines the mixed motives behind the men's decision to report their discovery and contrasts this with the king's cynical reaction, who doubted God's involvement. **Oswalt concludes by urging listeners to choose faith and trust in God's love and purposes over cynicism, even in the face of adversity.**

2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 20.2 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Kings).



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3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 20.2, 2 Kings 6-8, Part 2

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on 2 Kings 6-8, Part 2.

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on 2 Kings 6-8 (Part 2)

Source: Excerpts from "Oswalt_Kings_EN_Session20_2.pdf"

Main Themes:

- **Trusting Yahweh in the Face of the Impossible:** The central theme revolves around the importance of trusting God, even when circumstances seem hopeless and solutions appear impossible. The story of the siege of Samaria and its deliverance is given significant attention to underscore this lesson.
- **God's Use of Unlikely People:** Oswalt emphasizes that God frequently works through unexpected individuals, often those who are considered weak or unqualified by worldly standards. He contrasts this with those who rely on their own brilliance or competence, suggesting that such qualities can sometimes hinder God's work.
- **Motives and Right Action:** The lecture explores the complexities of human motivation, acknowledging that people often act with mixed or even selfish intentions. However, Oswalt argues that God values right action, even if the motives are not perfectly pure. He connects this to a broader societal decline in intrinsic motivation to do what is right.
- **Cynicism vs. Faith:** A crucial theme is the contrast between cynicism and faith. The king's cynical disbelief in God's ability to deliver Samaria is juxtaposed with the potential for open, trusting faith. The story's conclusion serves as a warning about the consequences of cynicism.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Proportionality in Scripture:** Oswalt raises the question of why certain biblical narratives receive more attention than others, suggesting that the detailed account of the Samaria siege is intended to highlight lessons about trusting God. "Why so much attention to this story? I suggest to you...that the reason this particular incident gets so much attention is precisely over these issues of trusting Yahweh."

- **The Four Men with a Contagious Skin Disease:** These individuals, likely not suffering from Hansen's disease (leprosy), are highlighted as outcasts who become instruments of God's deliverance. Their desperate situation leads them to take a risk, which ultimately reveals the empty Syrian camp. "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."
- **The Empty Syrian Camp and Mob Psychology:** The sudden and unexplained flight of the Syrian army is attributed to God's intervention, possibly manifested through a kind of "mob psychology" or mass panic. "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, they got up and fled in the dusk."
- **Mixed Motives in Reporting the Good News:** The four men initially prioritize their own gain by looting the abandoned camp. However, they eventually decide to report their discovery to the city, driven by a combination of altruism and fear of punishment. "This is a day of good news, and we're keeping it to ourselves...If we wait till daylight, punishment will overtake us."
- **The King's Cynicism:** The king's refusal to believe that God has delivered Samaria, instead suspecting a trap, demonstrates a lack of faith and a broken relationship with God. "Never once does he say, oh my, do you suppose Yahweh has delivered us? No...Oh, it's a trick. It's a trap."
- **The Fate of the Cynical Officer:** The officer who initially doubted God's ability to provide abundance is trampled to death at the city gate, highlighting the consequences of cynicism. "Get cynical about God, and there will come a day when your cynicism will come back to you full-blown."
- **The Importance of Inner Motivation:** Oswalt connects the story to contemporary society, arguing that a decline in intrinsic motivation to do what is right poses a significant challenge. "There are not enough police in the world to make us do the right thing if there's not that inner motivation to obey God."

Quotes:

- "Why so much attention to this story? I suggest to you...that the reason this particular incident gets so much attention is precisely over these issues of trusting Yahweh."
- "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."
- "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, they got up and fled in the dusk."
- "This is a day of good news, and we're keeping it to ourselves...If we wait till daylight, punishment will overtake us."
- "Never once does he say, oh my, do you suppose Yahweh has delivered us? No...Oh, it's a trick. It's a trap."
- "Get cynical about God, and there will come a day when your cynicism will come back to you full-blown."
- "There are not enough police in the world to make us do the right thing if there's not that inner motivation to obey God."

Conclusion:

Dr. Oswalt uses the narrative of 2 Kings 6-8 to emphasize the enduring importance of trusting God, even in seemingly impossible circumstances. He highlights God's penchant for using unexpected people, the complexities of human motivation, and the dangers of cynicism. The lecture connects these biblical themes to contemporary challenges, particularly the decline in intrinsic motivation to do what is right.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 20.2, 2 Kings 6-8, Part 2

Study Guide: 2 Kings 6-8, Part 2 (Focus on 2 Kings 6:24-7:20)

This study guide focuses on the latter half of 2 Kings chapters 6-8, specifically the siege of Samaria and its subsequent deliverance (2 Kings 6:24-7:20), as discussed in Dr. Oswalt's lecture.

I. Key Themes & Concepts

- **Trusting Yahweh in Crisis:** The central theme revolves around trusting God, even when circumstances appear impossible. The king's lack of faith contrasts sharply with the potential for belief and reliance on Yahweh's power.
- **God's Use of the Unlikely:** The narrative highlights God's tendency to work through unexpected individuals and situations. The four men with a contagious skin disease (often translated as lepers) are prime examples of God using the marginalized to bring about significant change.
- **Proportion and Emphasis:** Understanding why the biblical author dedicates significant space to this particular event is crucial. The length emphasizes the lessons of faith, obedience, and God's intervention.
- **Motives vs. Actions:** The story explores the complexity of human motivation. While pure motives are ideal, God can still work through actions that are partly driven by self-interest or fear, as long as they align with His will.
- **Cynicism and its Consequences:** The officer's cynical disbelief in God's ability to deliver Samaria leads to his tragic demise, highlighting the dangers of dismissing God's power.
- **Mob Mentality:** The lecture references the power of mob psychology in the Syrian army.

II. Key Characters

- **The King of Israel (Joram):** A ruler characterized by a lack of faith in Yahweh and a tendency towards skepticism and distrust.
- **The Four Men with a Contagious Skin Disease:** Outcasts from society who, driven by desperation, discover the abandoned Syrian camp and become the bearers of good news.

- **The King's Officer/Attendant:** A cynical figure who doubts the possibility of God's provision and ultimately suffers the consequences of his unbelief.
- **Elisha (Implied):** Although not explicitly present in these verses, Elisha's prophetic ministry and past miracles form the backdrop to the narrative, implying that the possibility of divine intervention should not be dismissed.
- **The Arameans (Syrians):** The enemy army that besieges Samaria, creating a situation of extreme famine and despair. Their sudden flight is attributed to divine intervention.

III. Literary Considerations

- **Narrative Structure:** Pay attention to the story's development – the siege, the plight of the inhabitants, the decision of the four men with a contagious skin disease, the discovery of the empty camp, the king's disbelief, the verification of the miracle, and the fulfillment of Elisha's prophecy.
- **Repetition:** The repetition of the officer's statement emphasizes the consequences of cynicism.
- **Irony:** The story contains elements of irony, such as the outcast individuals bringing salvation to the entire city.

IV. Quiz (Short Answer)

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Why does Dr. Oswalt suggest the story of the siege of Samaria receives so much attention in the biblical text?
2. According to Dr. Oswalt, what is the contagious skin disease mentioned in 2 Kings 7 not? What does he say about it?
3. Why does the king initially disbelieve the report of the abandoned Syrian camp?
4. What motivates the four men with a contagious skin disease to initially keep the discovery of the abandoned camp a secret?
5. How does the lecture connect the story to the concept of "mixed motives"?
6. What is Dr. Oswalt's view on doing the right thing, even if it is for the wrong reasons?

7. How does the lecture connect the narrative to the issue of internal motivation and obedience to the law?
8. According to the lecture, what is the danger of cynicism?
9. How does the lecture discuss the issue of mob mentality in the Syrian army?
10. What does the officer, who the king leaned on, say that was quoted by the author?

V. Quiz Answer Key

1. Dr. Oswalt suggests the story receives much attention to emphasize the importance of trusting Yahweh, believing in the impossible, and God's ability to work through unlikely people. It serves to underline these lessons in detail.
2. Dr. Oswalt states that the contagious skin disease is almost certainly not Hansen's disease (leprosy). He notes that Hansen's disease appeared later in Egypt, around the second century AD.
3. The king disbelieves the report because his lack of faith prevents him from believing that Yahweh could have delivered them. He immediately suspects a trap, reflecting his deep-seated distrust.
4. Initially, the men are motivated by self-interest and a desire to hoard the discovered wealth for themselves. They ate, drank, hid silver, gold, and clothing. However, after reflecting, they realize they must share the good news.
5. The lecture uses the four men with a contagious skin disease as an example to discuss mixed motives, highlighting that their initial desire to hoard the discovered wealth was selfish, yet their ultimate decision to report the good news was beneficial to the city.
6. Dr. Oswalt believes that doing the right thing is important, even if motivated by less-than-ideal reasons like fear of getting caught. He argues that societal benefit still results, and it's a necessary step towards acting with purer motives.
7. The lecture argues that external enforcement of laws (like police presence) is insufficient without an internal motivation to do what is right, rooted in a belief in God and His standards. America's historical strength was attributed to this inner motivation.

8. The lecture suggests that cynicism can lead to tragic consequences, as seen in the officer's death. It prevents one from recognizing and receiving God's blessings, even when they are clearly present.
9. Dr. Oswalt argues that fear and panic led the Syrian army to flee. Just as a mob can form quickly, fear can take over a large group of people, leading them to behave irrationally, which is what happened in the Syrian camp.
10. The officer asked, "Look, even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this ever happen?"

VI. Essay Questions

1. Analyze the role of faith (or lack thereof) in the narrative of 2 Kings 6:24-7:20. How does the faith (or lack thereof) of different characters influence the events and outcomes of the story?
2. Discuss the significance of the four men with a contagious skin disease as unlikely agents of deliverance. What does their story reveal about God's character and his methods of working in the world?
3. Explore the concept of "mixed motives" as it relates to the actions of the four men with a contagious skin disease. How does the narrative portray the complexities of human motivation, and what implications does this have for understanding God's grace and mercy?
4. Evaluate the consequences of cynicism as exemplified by the king's officer/attendant. How does his disbelief contribute to his downfall, and what broader lessons can be drawn from his story?
5. Using examples from the text and Dr. Oswalt's lecture, discuss how the narrative in 2 Kings 6:24-7:20 can be applied to contemporary issues of faith, social responsibility, and trust in God's provision during times of crisis.

VII. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Yahweh:** The personal name of God in the Hebrew Bible.
- **Siege:** A military tactic in which an army surrounds a city or fortress, cutting off its supplies and preventing entry or exit, in an attempt to force its surrender.
- **Samaria:** The capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel.
- **Arameans (Syrians):** A people who lived to the northeast of Israel and often engaged in warfare with the Israelites.
- **Contagious Skin Disease (Tzaraat):** A general term for a variety of skin ailments, not necessarily equivalent to Hansen's disease (leprosy) as it is known today.
- **Hansen's Disease:** A chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*, affecting the skin, peripheral nerves, upper respiratory tract, eyes, and testes.
- **Shekel:** An ancient unit of weight and currency.
- **Cynicism:** An attitude of scornful or jaded negativity, characterized by a distrust of others' motives and a belief that nothing is genuinely good or altruistic.
- **Altruism:** The principle or practice of unselfish concern for or devotion to the welfare of others.
- **Mob Psychology:** The study of how individuals behave in a crowd or mob situation, often characterized by irrationality, emotional contagion, and a loss of individual responsibility.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 20.2, 2 Kings 6-8, Part 2, Biblealearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on 2 Kings 6-8 (Part 2) & Trusting God in Difficult Times

1. Why does the story of the Aramean siege of Samaria and its deliverance receive so much attention in the biblical text?

The extended narrative likely serves to emphasize the importance of trusting Yahweh, even when circumstances appear impossible. It highlights the king's initial disbelief and reluctance to turn to God, contrasting with the eventual deliverance achieved through unlikely means (the lepers). God wants to highlight the lessons of trusting in him during impossible situations.

2. Who were the four men with a contagious skin disease, and what role did they play in the deliverance of Samaria?

These men were outcasts due to their contagious skin disease, and were situated outside the city gate. Facing starvation whether they stayed or ventured out, they decided to go to the Aramean camp in hopes of finding food or mercy. They discovered the Aramean camp was deserted and they were the first to deliver the good news to the city. These were the least likely people in the community who were able to deliver the city from peril.

3. What motivated the four men to ultimately report their discovery of the deserted Aramean camp to the city?

Their motivation was initially mixed. They were eating and drinking, but they knew they needed to report their discovery to the city. They recognized the moral wrong of keeping the good news to themselves while others were starving. They also possibly feared punishment if they were found looting while the city remained in distress. But at the end of the day, they did the right thing by reporting their discovery.

4. How did the King of Israel react to the news of the Aramean's retreat, and what does this reveal about his relationship with God?

The king initially reacted with suspicion, believing it was a trap by the Arameans. This demonstrates a lack of trust in God and a fractured relationship. He could not conceive that Yahweh could deliver them.

5. What is the significance of the officer who doubted God's ability to provide being trampled to death at the city gate?

The officer's fate serves as a stark warning against cynicism and disbelief in God's power. It highlights how skepticism can blind one to God's provision, ultimately leading to negative consequences. This illustrates the idea that cynicism will eventually come back to you.

6. According to the author, why does God sometimes choose to work through unlikely people?

God often works through the least likely people because those who are brilliant, gifted, and competent may rely on their own abilities and take credit for the outcome. Those with nothing to lose are more likely to throw themselves on God. Through the unlikely people, God can show his power, and his work is apparent for all to see.

7. What does the story teach about the importance of inner motivation in doing what is right?

The story suggests that while doing the right thing is crucial, the underlying motivation is also important. Ideally, people should be motivated by a desire to obey God and act selflessly. However, even if actions are driven by fear of consequences or mixed motives, doing what is right still holds value.

8. How can individuals cultivate a trusting and confident attitude toward God, even in the face of pessimism or difficult circumstances?

By acknowledging God's love and purposes, individuals can consciously choose to trust that He will accomplish His good intentions, regardless of their personality tendencies or current situations. This requires a deliberate effort to maintain faith and confidence in God's ability to work through any circumstances.