

2 Kings 6:24- 7:2

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles, go with me to 2 Kings chapter 6. 2 Kings chapter 6, we're going to pick up in verse 24, okay? 2 Kings chapter 6, starting in verse 24, we're going to read into the 7th chapter to the 2nd verse.

So, 2 Kings chapter 6, verse 24, into chapter 7, verse 2. The reason being that chapter break is really in an odd place.

I mean, I know why it's there. The remainder of the event, the fulfillment of it is found throughout the remainder of chapter 7, but we're not going to look at that tonight. We're still focusing on the ministry of Elisha.

Elisha in the northern kingdom and his work among the people of God that are not living as if they're the people of God, right? We understand the northern kingdom is still living in open rebellion.

And though time and time and time again God has validated himself, he has shown himself strong and mighty, he has declared his worthiness of their worship, yet the people still are walking in what we would refer to as open rebellion.

[1 : 10] I love Spurgeon's take on the passage that we have before us, and I hope that you see it that way as well. That God's long-suffering and his patience and his kindness are really overly, we cannot overstate that.

That God is very patient. He's loving, kind. He is gracious towards us. But the judgment of God, while certain, is not his first response.

You'll see that in just a moment. And that God is a God of judgment, for sure. He is a God of holiness and righteousness. So judgment is certain. But he is not preconceived to judge quickly, as we would say.

He does not leave man without an opportunity of repentance and without an opportunity of walking in obedience to him. And we see this in particular with Elijah and Elisha and their ministries there because God appointed them to the northern kingdom.

We haven't focused much at all on the southern kingdom who has kings who are walking and doing what is right in the sight of the Lord their God. And they're leading kind of national reforms in the word of God and they're around it.

[2 : 21] It is the northern kingdom that seems to be walking away from the Lord, from really the rulers downward into their homes, that God has appointed the greatest alarms and the greatest voice and the declarations of the truth and the worthiness of God.

They are really shining in this presence. Now, we know that there are, sure, prophets and problems as well in the southern kingdom. We get to those later.

But we're focusing here. So let's pick it up in the 24th verse. Now, this is admittedly one of the difficult portions of scripture. So we want to flesh that out in that not difficult to understand but difficult to receive.

And we'll see why in just a moment. And that's our ambition is to kind of flesh that out. If you remember, the marooning bands of the Arameans who came, Elisha's minister, when they came to him, he asked the Lord to call blindness upon them, led them into Samaria.

And then they treated them with kindness and favor and they fed them, put a feast before them. And they went back home. And it tells us there in verse 23 that the marooning bands came no longer there.

[3 : 31] Okay. Some time passed between that 23rd verse and 24th verse. And then we see here still this enemy of God's people coming against them. It says, Now it came about after this that Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, gathered all his army.

Not the marooning bands. He's not sending just portions anymore now. He has his whole army. Gathered all his army and went up and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria. And behold, they besieged it until a donkey's head was sold for 80 shekels of silver and a fourth of a cab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver.

As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried to him saying, Help my lord, O king. He said, If the lord does not help you, from where shall I help you? From the threshing floor or from the wine press?

And the king said to her, What is the matter with you? And she answered, The woman said to me, This woman said to me, Give your son that we may eat him today and we will eat my son tomorrow. So we boiled my son and ate him.

And I said to her on the next day, Give your son that we may eat him. But she has hidden her son. When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes.

[4 : 38] Now he was passing by on the wall. And the people looked, And behold, he had sackcloth beneath on his body. Then he said, May God do so to me, And more also, If the head of Elisha, the son of Shaphat, remains on him today.

Now Elisha was sitting in his house, And the elders were sitting with him. And the king sent a man from his presence. But before the messenger came to him, He said to the elders, Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent to take away my head?

Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold the door shut against him. It's not the sound of his master's feet behind him. While he was still talking with them, behold, the messenger came down to him, and he said, Behold, this evil is from the Lord.

Why should I wait for the Lord any longer? Then Elisha said, Listen to the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord, Tomorrow, about this time, a measure of fine flour will be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

The royal officer, on whose hand the king was leaning, answered the man of God and said, Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, could this thing be? Then he said, Behold, you will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat of it.

[5 : 54] 2 Kings 6, verses 24 through chapter 7, verse 2. I want you to see this evening, The Misery of Sin and the Mercy of God. The Misery of Sin and the Mercy of God.

There at the conclusion of this passage, we're not 100% clear from the text who makes the declaration that this evil is from the Lord. Why should I wait any longer?

It seems in our text that it is the messenger who arose that they were holding the door against the would-be assassin was the one who made this declaration. But the reason we read into the 7th chapter, it is very clear when we get into the first two verses of the 7th chapter that when Elisha answers him, he is answering to the king.

He is speaking with reference to the king because the king's right-hand man, the one on whom the king leaned upon, that's his right-hand man, is present there as well. And he declares that the feet of his master is behind him.

So we see here the misery of sin and the mercy of God. We run across these difficult passages often in the historical and the prophetic works of the Old Testament.

[7 : 04] We read passages which tell of great misery and great suffering of things which are unimaginable and unthinkable. This one is one of them. Not only do we see them eating the utmost of unclean animals, the head of a donkey, and selling it for an obscene amount of money.

There is some debate on whether or not it is actually dove's dung or something they are referring to as the pods of some shells that the doves would discard. But the wording seems to imply that they are also going to the extent that it is the waste of the dung that they are eating from the dove.

And then we see the resulting of cannibalism. It is a really difficult passage to not only read but to consider and to think about. And when we get to this passage we have to ask ourselves where is God in all of this and what is the Lord doing?

But we need to remind ourselves here that this is both the misery of sin and the mercy of God. The first thing that we see in this passage is the prophets of sin and rebellion.

That is the wages of sin is death. We understand that. And here sin and rebellion bring their prophets to the people. Prophets that is the money they make. Their earnings.

[8 : 21] And we see it because it says now it came about after this. After what? After Elisha's presence had been there. After Elisha had declared how the Lord was speaking through him safety and security for the people of Israel.

After God had used Elisha to enable the people to show kindness to the Arameans who were present before them. Yet in spite of all of this what we do not read in scripture is any form of repentance or return to the Lord God as the true one who is providing these matters.

And we read that after this Ben-Hadad the king of Aram gathers his whole soldiers his whole troops and they besiege the city of Samaria. No longer is he concerned with stationing people here and there because he knows that Elisha is telling them where his locale is.

Now he is besieging the capital city and he comes and he holds the capital city they lock themselves short and we understand that famine comes upon the land and these atrocious matters begin to take place.

Salvation sets in and really desperation. And we ask ourselves how could we get here? Well if we really want to know how we get here then we have to go back to the book of Leviticus.

[9 : 32] And you have to go back to Leviticus chapter 26 because there's a prophetic word spoken of the Lord and from the Lord in the 26th chapter of the book of Leviticus.

And God is speaking through the man of God that is Moses. The word of God that is declaring truth that God is showing himself. Leviticus. What is the theme of the book of Leviticus?

Do you remember? It's been so many years ago that we went through it. The theme of Leviticus is be holy as I am holy says the Lord. Right? So the theme of the book of Leviticus is the holiness of God.

It is there that we read in the first five chapters of the book of Leviticus about all the sacrifices they should offer. Each of those sacrifices pointing to the ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

How they ought to atone for their sin. How there is no atonement for the high handed sin. That God is calling his people. To walk in holiness. He is providing a means for that.

[10 : 34] That's why it's titled Leviticus because of the Levitical priesthood and all those realities that are there. They are really kind of demonstrated throughout all of that. We see that God is calling his people to walk according to faithfulness and providing means for that opportunity.

He's giving them sacrifices and things that they should hold to. Festivals they should keep. If there is a way to be holy we can have it laid out for us in the book of Leviticus and we say it not really jokingly but the reality is that we don't get very far into that book until every one of us find ourselves guilty.

That every one of us find ourselves in need of one of those sacrifices of atonement and cleansing. But by the time we get to the end of the book of Leviticus and we get there near the end in the 26th chapter the Lord says but if you do not keep these commands and that's what we pay attention to because he says if you fail to keep these commands then God and you need to go read the chapter pick it up in about the 14th verse and God says if you're not faithful to keep these things then I will begin to do things and God starts speaking of the reality that he will bring judgment upon his people and it's not a judgment of condemnation it is a judgment of calling them back.

Right? And read the chapter I'm not going to ask you to read it tonight we're not going to read it while we're together but the judgments start out pretty mild. If you don't walk in faithfulness then I will shut the rain stores of heaven and the rain will not come upon the land.

And if you don't repent then then I will call the nations to come and attack you. And if you don't repent then then the wild beast will come out. And if you notice in that 26th chapter God will say seven times I will judge you seven times I will judge you seven times I will judge you seven being the number of completion God is saying at each time I will bring a complete judgment upon your rebellion.

[12 : 32] When you get to the final arm of judgment God says and if in these matters you do not repent then I will call a nation which you do not know to ransack you and to besiege you and you will eat the offspring of your own children.

So the reality is this is the first recording of the fulfillment of that warning. We read it later on the book of Jeremiah we see it there too.

God had told them if you fail to obey and then you do not repent with the coming judgments it is going to get worse and worse and worse until you come to the place where you are so desperate you eat your own offspring.

How do we get to this place? Where is God in this horrid event? He is where he has always been. He has been mercifully faithfully calling people to repentance but they have continued to rebel they have continued to push back they have continued to walk in unfaithfulness and finally they are reaping the rewards of their sin.

We look at this and we say well this is terrible if God is a good God then how could things like this happen? Because God will not be mocked. God is also faithful to his self to his word to his holiness.

[14 : 11] God will not allow his people to continue unabated in sinful lifestyles and sinful realities. He's calling them to attention.

We're not focused on what's going on with the remainder of the world here. What we see is what's happening with the people of God. I know the nation is divided. You have the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. But read your prophetic word in scripture.

God never refers to them as two nations. He refers to them as the nation of Israel. Because man has divided it but the Lord still sees them as one.

And we notice that when Elijah had his showdown with the prophets of Baal he used 12 stones on the altar. He was always according to the number of those realities.

But what we see is this is the prophet of sin and rebellion. This is what you get when that's what you want.

[15 : 13] And God had been faithful. He had declared to them. The kings and leaders of his people were to have those first five books the Pentateuch committed to heart and memory.

They were to read them. They were to write them. They were to inscribe them. They would know these warnings. Yet we see those who forsook these warnings. Those who knew not of these warnings are the very ones who walk in this season here of rebellion.

And we are reminded that God is still bringing them. He tells them that if they do not even repent then they will be carried away. When we get to the 17th chapter I believe it is the 2nd Kings they are carried away by people they do not know.

That's the Assyrians. The word of God is true. The word of God is faithful. And what we see is man is beginning to reap what they have been sowing.

Have they had opportunity? Yes. Elijah was there. Elisha is there. Prior to Elijah there were other prophets there. Time after time. Think about it. If you go back and you read it.

[16 : 19] We are not again not going to go through. Think about all the matters that have happened. Right? Since they began to walk in rebellion. They began to experience famines. They began to experience food shortages.

They began to experience animals. You think of the you bald head you bald head. Remember the attacks of the animals coming out of nowhere. They began to experience all these things which seem strange to us and it seems odd to us.

But yet when we read Leviticus chapter 26 they're all recorded that these matters would happen to get their attention. people. But yet they have still denied it.

And now we've come to this place where we say how could this happen? Because God is as he says elsewhere in scripture giving them over to their own desires and this is what you get.

We see the prophet of sin and rebellion. Secondly we see in this passage here the posture of the people. There's a number of people that we see throughout this passage but we see the posture of the people.

[17 : 18] Surely the majority of the people in the city they're in a great place of hunger. They're in a place of starvation. We see the desperation of the two women. I mean can you imagine coming to that position where the two women are in such a desperate position.

Not only are those that are there eating the head of a donkey and eating the dung of the dove but here's cannibalism that is going on. We see this posture of desperation. We see the king walking around the city walls and ensuring that no one goes over to the Arameans there.

We see that he is making sure that everybody is staying in. We notice that when he hears this reality don't miss this too it says that he rips his clothes and he tours his clothes and as he was walking on the wall people saw the sackcloth underneath his clothes against his flesh or on his body.

So we would be tempted to say oh well sackcloth that is the garments of mourning and weeping and repentance right? Maybe he's mourning and weeping and repenting. You're not really doing it if you're covering it up with your outer garment.

You say well then why does he have it on? Well if we read the entire story if this is really a brokenness and a repentance over sin then surely as soon as the sackcloth is seen the words out of his mouth would not be I'm going to cut the head off of Elisha.

[18 : 28] More than likely he has looked back throughout history not very far back and seen that his father was also in a strait at one time his father being Ahab and his father had a problem and Ahab was genuinely broken.

He put on sackcloth as his outer garment and God honored that repentance. You find it there in the book of 1 Kings. God honored that repentance and extended the life of Ahab and prolonged the judgment that was soon coming to him.

More than likely he said well if it worked for my dad it worked for me. The difference is it was the difference of the hearts. Right Ahab was broken. The king here just wants the benefits.

He has it on underneath his royal attire. We can't say that he is he is humble and he is broken over these realities. He is penitent over them because he is also declaring that we would cut off the head of Elisha.

So we understand these realities. He's in a posture of wanting the benefits of God's presence but not really looking for the presence of God. He has the people that are broken but then we also notice there are the elders of the city.

[19 : 37] It's very historically accurate by the way during this time because you would have the elders and the king not always working together but the king is with them but the elders are the ones seeking to make the decision.

Do you know where the elders are at? Sitting at the house with Elisha. They're at the house with Elisha because they know just like everyone else it's a desperate time.

They're not sitting with the king. They're sitting with Elisha because he alone has the answer. The king cannot help. The woman cries out and says help me oh Lord our king.

He says how can I help you if the Lord won't help you if Yahweh won't help you what can I do? The threshing floor there is no wheat. The wine press there is no wine I have nothing to give you. I am limited in my resources.

The elders aren't calling out to the king. The elders are sitting at the feet of Elisha. Notice the posture of the people during this time because by noticing the posture of the people now we come to the third thing and that is the presence of the prophet.

[20 : 43] In the midst of the tragedy and in the midst of the terribleness if that is a word of the situation Elisha Elisha is still there. Don't let that reality escape you.

Famine is throughout the whole city. Hunger is a very present reality among everyone that is there and in the midst of that Elisha is still there.

He's still at home. Being a man of God who very clearly received the revelations of God and could declare the word of God just like the account that precedes this we cannot say that Elisha was taken off guard because the Arameans came and besieged the city.

If he knew where the marooning bands were going to be camping surely he knew the entire army was coming. Yet he did not flee. He did not go. He did not do what we would call self-preservation.

He was there. Why? Because if these judgments are intended to call people back to the Lord then God needs a mouthpiece in the flesh to be present when that time comes.

[21 : 55] Too often the church has sought to isolate themselves in the middle of difficulties and tragedies and all of these events when the church ought to be the present reality in the mouthpiece of the Lord during the midst of that.

I know that I've read so much of the brothers and sisters throughout the world who are going through persecution and many of them do not pray that the persecution will be removed. They pray that they would remain faithful in the midst of that persecution because they know that they are present to be the mouthpiece of God because they know the hearts and men of individuals are desperately seeking for an answer.

Right now in many Islamic countries they're having to close down mosques because people are coming to the reality that there's a greater truth out there. Well that greater truth is being found because God's people are present and they are being able to talk to someone and the reality of the gospel is being declared.

Elisha stayed present during the midst of this tragedy, during the midst of this famine, during the midst of this struggle. Why? Because he knew the opportunity would be there to proclaim the word of God.

It is what we refer to as the ministry of presence. What if Elisha had left? What if he had not been there? Then where would the people have went if and when God began to get their attention?

[23 : 15] See he remained and we stand in awe at the presence of the prophet because who else could have declared the word of God at such a season as this? We see the misery of sin but we see the mercy of God because he left his man there.

I told Carrie this morning, I said if you ever want to feel better about the ministry God calls you to, just read the Old Testament and see the ministry he gave some of those guys.

Right? Ezekiel laying on one side for a number of days, laying on the other side and cooking his food by measure over, first of all, it's supposed to be human waste and then it becomes animal waste.

I said, you know if there's ever a pastor that thinks he has are difficult, just read the book of Ezekiel, it's not that bad yet. Being tired and not being able to talk and not being able to move when we read this but what we see is God puts his people in place for a purpose with each one of them because God is doing something in the midst of that misery.

He's doing something and he has to have and he wants his people in place so that what he is doing in the hearts and minds of those in the midst of the misery of their sin, they have someone to turn to.

[24 : 31] And that's the reality of what it looks like to say, Lord, use me. I want to be a tool in your hand. Here I am at your disposal. It is the presence that changes it all.

And then we get to the fourth and final thing here. We see the profit of sin and rebellion. We see the posture of the people amongst the city. We see the presence of the prophet.

And then number four, we see the power of doubt. When the would-be assassin comes to the door, the elders hold the door against him. Elisha is not afraid.

He's just waiting on the king to get there because he has a word for the king. Well, it's hard to declare a word without your head, right? So he says, hold on for just a minute. It is implied from the text that the king shows up by the time Elisha answers in the seventh chapter.

It says, then Elisha said, listen to the word of the Lord. By the way, that's not a suggestion, that's a command. Listen to the word of the Lord.

[25 : 37] In the midst of this miserable season, in the midst of this time of judgment, in the midst of God calling your attention, listen to the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, tomorrow about this time, a measure of fine flour will be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria.

We're talking about a rather insignificant amount compared to the amount that they were paying peasantly for the head of a donkey. Now, this is an unbelievable declaration.

You've read the rest of the story. Possibly if not, we'll look at it Wednesday night. God delivers in some most unlikely of ways, but we're not here to look at that. We're here to look at how God has a word and the word is this won't last long.

Right? God has a word because the people, their attention has been gathered. Now they're ready to listen. They're prepared. The circumstances and the situations have brought them to the place where they ought to respond to the word of God, at least hear the word of God.

The sad tragedy, we'll go ahead and instill this. The sad tragedy is that even when these matters are fulfilled, there is no praise of declaration to the Lord God for bringing it about. So again, go back to Leviticus 26.

[26 : 52] This didn't get their attention. The final judgment will come and that is they will be scattered among the nations. But even then, God does not forget them. Notice the mercy of God.

And the mercy of God is declared in the word that he gives here is that he will provide supernaturally through natural means in a supernatural way. Right? Natural means through a supernatural way, but he's going to provide supernaturally.

But we notice this royal officer on whose hand the king was leaning. That is the right hand man of the king. He is in a great position, at least in the political realm.

He is of great prestige among men. He is the royal officer. And he says, behold, if the Lord should make windows into heaven, could this thing be? He doubts the word of God.

Elisha had made a very clear declaration. Listen to the word of the Lord. Here he doubts what God says, because in his mind and in his imagination, it does not seem even possible.

[27 : 52] But notice this. He says, then Elisha says, or he said, behold, you will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat of it. Again, we'll see the fulfillment of that later on in this chapter. But I want you to notice here the power of doubt.

simply because he did not believe the word of God, he would not benefit from the word of God. This is a very telling thing when we open up the New Testament and we read in the Gospels.

We know that Christ is unlimited in abilities and authority and power. We believe, just as John declares, that the things which Christ has done, which Christ did when he walked among men, could not be contained in the world if they were recorded in books.

That he was one who did many miraculous deeds, many, many more than we have recorded for us in Scripture. We have a sufficient amount in Scripture to cause us to pause and take notice.

But this is nowhere near the entirety of them. But we also notice the one thing that strikes me is when we read the passage, it says he could not do any miraculous deed.

[29 : 09] And I ask myself, well, what could be the limiting power? What could stop the Lord and Savior? What could stop the one who spoke it all into existence from being able to do anything he would long to do?

And it is when he went into his hometown, it said he could not do anything because of their unbelief. Because of their unbelief.

God does not force his word upon anyone. Again, we have repeated for us when Christ says, go and may it be done according to your belief or your faith.

We see one who does not believe and doubts the word of God for the doubter of the word of God. There is no benefit from the word of God.

This man will be very present when the fulfillment of it comes, but he will not take part in it. Because it is a very powerful thing to doubt the word of God.

[30 : 12] Can God overcome our doubts? Sure. But by the time this man speaks, God had validated himself over and over and over again. And yet in the midst of this judgment, he had not humbled himself to come to the acknowledgement that he desperately needed God to do what only God could do.

Rather, he was still looking at things from human means. And it caused him to doubt the ability of God. Those who doubt receive no benefit. We see the misery of sin.

But in the midst of it, we see the mercy of God. God does not have to fulfill this word. God does not have to declare this word. God is just. If judgment would come to his finality here.

But he is a God who is slow to anger. And full of loving kindness. We see it being displayed here, even in the midst of the wickedness of man, as they are walking in season after season after season of rebellion.

Again, I encourage you. Read Leviticus 26 in connection with these difficult passages. This is why we have the fullness of the word of God, right?

[31 : 27] We come to these passages and we say, how can it be? Well, it's because God said it would be if they didn't listen. And be reminded, too, that the same God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament is the God of today.

God still longs to gather our attention to himself. He will continue to call his people to repentance time and time and time again.

And he will not be mocked until we finally fall on our face and say, yes, Lord. You alone are what I need. And you alone are the one I count on.

Let's pray and we'll be dismissed. Father, we thank you so much. We thank you that your word declares your authority, your power, and your mercy.

Lord, we know the reality that quite often the misery we walk in is the result of our own sin or the sins of others. Lord, in the midst of that pain and suffering, we praise you that you're there.

[32 : 33] And we praise you even that you leave us there, that we may be a voice to declare, listen to the word of the Lord. Lord, we pray that we would walk faithfully in the days ahead.

We pray that we would walk intentionally for your glory and honor. Lord, help us to be your people who walk in humility, who walk in sincerity, and who walk in truth.

God, thank you for this day. Thank you for each one that's here. Thank you for speaking to our hearts and minds your word. And may its truth have application in our lives. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. Thank you, guys. Amen. Amen.