

File No. 81

II KINGS 6:24 – 7:20

FAMINE IN SAMARIA / 'A DAY OF GOOD NEWS'

(SBS Bk 3 Story Nos. 28 & 29)

Story Notes

Aram attacks again.

After some time, Aram's peacableness and the king of Israel's respect for Elisha had vanished. Another attack from Aram had come to the point of Samaria being under siege and the people inside were reduced to eating unclean food, and their own children. The king's distress and the revealing of sackcloth under his clothes suggest that he was expressing repentance toward God; only the Lord could help them now. But his idea of relief from trouble was to vent his anger against Elisha.

It seems that the elders of the city respected Elisha, and they helped him escape the King's irrational rage. The king had given up hope for himself from God.

'Food would soon be plentiful and cheap' said Elisha, except that the captain who expressed his doubt would not taste any of it. His word could have done great damage if it had not been countered immediately. Then, God did for the King (who was effectively his enemy) what he had earlier instructed him to do for his captive enemy: he fed him and his whole city (6:22–23).

The lepers who had nothing to lose were the first to discover the Lord's generosity. They were the first also, to realise that it was time to live in that generosity by sharing it with the whole city. The king still could not believe he would see any good from the Lord. He was in danger of being like the later King Ahaz, to whom Isaiah said, 'If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all' (Isa. 7:9). The King's men, like the lepers, could see that they had nothing to lose and found a way around the despair of their king. So, the extent of God's power and of his care for his people was discovered and food was soon plentiful and cheap. But the King's captain missed the great feast that followed. The judgement on him was a warning to all concerning failure to believe in the God of Israel.

© 2000 Grant Thorpe