

Elisha ~ Part 19

In my last post, we continued to explore the ministry of **Elisha** by looking at **2 Kings 6:24-33** where we learned that **God Who Keeps His Covenant**. In this post, we continue with **2 Kings 7:1-16** where we hear some **Good News**.

Recall in my last post, **Elisha** had instructed his servant to bare the door from **King Yoram** and his servant. Now, **Elisha** opens the door.

¹ Elisha answered, 'Listen to the word of Adonai. Here is what Adonai says: 'Tomorrow, by this time, six quarts of fine flour will sell for only a shekel, and half a bushel of barley for a shekel [in the market] at the gate to Shomron.' ² The servant on whose arm the king was leaning answered the man of God: 'Why this couldn't happen even if Adonai made windows in heaven!' Elisha answered, 'All right, you yourself will see it with your own eyes; but you won't eat any of it!'

³ Now there were four men with tzara'at at the entrance to the city gate, and they said to each other, "Why should we sit here till we die? ⁴ If we say, 'We'll enter the city, then the city has been struck by the famine, so we'll die there. And if we sit still here, we'll also die. So, let's go and surrender to the army of Aram; if they spare our lives, we will live; and if they kill us, we'll only die.'" ⁵ They got up during the twilight to go to the camp of Aram. But when they reached the outskirts of the camp of Aram, they saw no one! ⁶ For Adonai had caused the army of Aram to hear the sound of chariots and horses; it sounded like a huge army; and they said to each other, "The king of Isra'el must have hired the kings of the Hitti and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us." ⁷ So they jumped up and fled in the twilight, leaving their tents, horses, donkeys and the whole camp just as it was, and ran for their lives. ⁸ When these men with tzara'at reached the outskirts of the camp, they entered one of the tents, ate and drank; then took some silver, gold, and clothing; and went and hid it. Next, they returned and entered another tent, took stuff from there, and went and hid it. ⁹ But finally, they said to each other, "What we are doing is wrong. At a time of good news like this, we shouldn't keep it to ourselves. If we wait even till morning, we will earn only punishment; so come on, let's go and tell the king's household." ¹⁰ So they came and shouted to the gatekeepers of the city and told them the news: "We went to the camp of Aram, and no one was there, no human voice — just the horses and donkeys tied up, and the tents left in place." ¹¹ The gatekeepers called and told it to the king's household inside. ¹² Then the king got up in the night; he said to his servants, "I'll tell you what Aram has done to us. They know that we're hungry, so they've gone outside the camp and hidden in the countryside, saying, 'When they come out of the city, we'll take them alive and then get inside the city.'" ¹³ One of his servants answered, "I suggest letting some men take five of the remaining horses that are left in the city — they're like everything else in Isra'el that remains, like everything else in Isra'el, practically finished — and we'll send and see." ¹⁴ So they took two chariots with horses, and the king sent after the army of Aram, saying, "Go, and see." ¹⁵ They went after them all the way to the Yarden and found the entire distance strewn with clothing and other articles Aram had thrown away in their haste. The messengers returned and told the king. ¹⁶ Then the people went out and ransacked the camp of Aram — with the result that six quarts of fine flour was sold for only a shekel and half a bushel of barley for a shekel, in keeping with what Adonai had said." ~ 2 Kings 7:1-16 (CJB)

Good News from the Lord

How fortunate it was for the kingdom of Israel that they had **Elisha** the prophet living and ministering among them! Throughout Hebrew history, in times of crisis, the prophets had God's message for God's people, whether they obeyed it or not. **King Yoram** could turn to the priests of Ba'al, but they had nothing to say.

Yoram wants something to happen now; he would wait no longer. But **Elisha** opened his message with *"tomorrow, by this time."* Food would once more be available, and the inflationary prices would fall drastically. The fine flour for the people and the barley for the animals would cost about twice as much as in normal times. This was a great relief from the prices the people had paid for unclean food (see my last post).

The king's servant didn't believe the words of the prophet and scoffed at what **Elisha** said. To the humble heart that's open to God, the Word generates faith; but to the proud, self-centered heart, the Word makes the heart even harder. The same sun that melts the ice will harden the clay. The next morning, all the people in the city except this servant would awaken to life, but he would awaken to death.

Good News from the Enemy Camp

The scene now shifts to outside the locked gates of **Shomron** where four lepers lived in isolation. Nobody had told them about **Elisha's** promise of food. They were discussing their precarious situation when they came to an insightful conclusion: if they stayed at the gate, they would die of hunger, but if they went to the enemy camp, they might receive some pity and some food. Even if the **Aramian** killed them, it was better to die quickly from a sword's thrust than to die slowly from hunger. Lest they be observed from the city wall, they waited until twilight before going to the **Aramian** camp. Most of the camp would be resting, and the lepers would have to deal only with some of the guards.

But nobody was there! The Lord had caused them to hear a sound which they interpreted as the coming of a vast army, and they had left their camp as it was and fled twenty-five miles to the **Yarden River**, scattering their possessions as they ran. The four lepers did what any hungry men would have done: they ate to the full and then looted the tents for wealth, which they hid.

However, as night came on, they stopped to have another conference and assess the situation. Why should an entire city be starving, and mothers eating their children, while four dying men are selfishly enjoying the resources in the abandoned camp? Furthermore, when morning comes, the whole city will discover that the enemy has fled, and they'll wonder why the men didn't say something. When the truth comes out, the four men would be punished for keeping the good news to themselves.

The lepers gave guard at the gate the good news, and one of the officers took the message to the king. Once again revealing his unbelief and pessimism, **Yoram** said that the whole thing was a trick, that the enemy was hiding and only trying to draw the people out of the city so that they could move in. It wasn't so much that he doubted the word of the lepers as that he rejected the word of **Elisha**. Had he believed the Word of the Lord, he would have accepted the good news from the lepers.

One of the officers had the good sense to reason with the king. The spies who were sent out to verify the leper's story raced back to the city and shared the good news that the **Aramian** army was gone and their camp was waiting to be looted. It was indeed a day of good news as the people found food to eat and to sell back in the city, not to speak of valuable material goods that could be converted into cash. But the main lesson isn't that God rescued His people when they didn't deserve it, but that God fulfilled the promise He gave through His prophet **Elisha**.

If people don't believe the Word of the Lord, they won't be ready for His coming; but if we don't give them the message, they can't be ready for His coming. What will we say when we meet the Lord?

In my next post, we continue to explore the life of **Elisha**. In this post, we will pick up the story of **Elisha** in **2 Kings 8:1-6** where we learn three aspects of the **Greatness of Our God**.