



The Syrians often sent small bands of soldiers to cities in Israel, stealing valuables and even people. (Do you remember Naaman's [NAY-uh-muhn's] servant girl? She was kidnaped on one of those raids.)

Through the Prophet Elisha, God warned the king of Israel where these raids were going to happen. So, the people of Israel were able to protect themselves. Finally, the Syrians stopped sending the bands to Israel.

After some time had passed, the Syrians decided to try another tactic. The king of Syria gathered all his army and surrounded the city of Samaria. They waited, allowing no one to leave or enter the city. They wanted to force the people of Samaria to surrender to the Syrian army. This is called a "siege."

Soon "there was a great famine in Samaria." (A famine happens when there is very little food.) What little food was in Samaria was sold for a high price! The people were starving, and many became desperate.

One day "as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall," a woman cried out to him, "Help, my lord, O king." When King Jehoram (*juh-HOR-uhm*) spoke to her, he found out that people were eating their own children! God had repeatedly warned Israel this terrible thing would happen if they turned their backs on Him (Leviticus 26:29; Deuteronomy 28:53, 57).

This upset the king so much that he tore his clothes and began wearing sackcloth (rough clothing worn in times of mourning). He blamed the Prophet Elisha for this trouble and determined that Elisha was to be killed. The king sent a messenger to cut off Elisha's head.

Elisha knew King Jehoram's servant was coming. He told the elders, who were with him, "See ye how this son of a murderer [Jehoram was the son of Ahab, who was responsible for Naboth's death] hath sent to take away mine head?" Elisha told the elders to stop the messenger at the door and not let him in. Elisha knew that the king was coming also, for he said, "Is not the sound of his master's feet [the king] behind him?"

When the king arrived, leaning on the arm of an officer, Elisha told him "To morrow about this time"

Church of God Sunday School

THE FOUR LEPERS OF SAMARIA

2 Kings 6:24 — 7:20

there would be food and it would be sold cheaply. The officer did not believe Elisha and said, "If the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" In other words, he thought God would have to cause food to rain out of the sky for this to actually happen. Because of his unbelief, Elisha told him, "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof."

That night, four men with leprosy were "at the entering in of the gate." They, too, were starving. They began to talk among themselves, saying, "Why sit we here until we die?" If they went into the city, they would die from the famine. If they continued to stay at the city gate, they would also die. So, they decided to go to the Syrian camp and give themselves up as prisoners. Perhaps, the Syrians would allow them to live.

To their surprise, when they reached the Syrian camp, there was no one there! During the night God had caused the Syrian army to hear a great noise that sounded like chariots, horses, and a great army. The Syrians thought the king of Israel had hired soldiers to come and fight. They fled, leaving everything—their food, silver, gold, extra clothing, horses, and tents. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth" (Proverbs 28:1).

This is what the lepers found! They went from one tent to another, eating and taking some of the clothing, gold, and silver. Then the lepers remembered the starving people of Samaria. They said, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings." So, they went and told the gatekeeper what they had found.

When King Jehoram heard the news, he was afraid that it was a trap laid by the Syrians. But when men were sent to search for the Syrian army, they found



that the road "was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste." The men returned and told the king.

There was plenty of food in the Syrian camp, and it was sold very cheaply. The words of Elisha came true! The officer who did not believe this would happen was put in charge of the gate. But there were so many people and they were in such a hurry to get to the food, the officer was knocked down and trampled to

death. Just as Elisha said, the officer saw the food, but he did not eat any of it.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*" . . . this day is a day of good tidings . . . come, that we may go and tell the king's household."*

*—2 Kings 7:9*

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