

Life Lesson 89
The Famine and the Feast
Text: II Kings 6:24 to 7:20

Introduction

Everyone was starving! The people in Samaria where the Israelites lived were so hungry they were eating stuff that wasn't really food. They even paid 80 pieces of silver for a dead donkey's head to cook for their dinner. The Syrians had attacked them and they couldn't get any food into the city. Now they were miserable with hunger.

The Story

The king put on his robe and kingly garments and walked out into the city to see how the people were doing. When he saw how miserable everyone was, he couldn't stand it. He tore his clothes as a way of showing grief. The people could see then that he was wearing sackcloth and ashes underneath his fancy clothes. People wore that kind of clothing when they were sad and mourning.

"It's Elisha's fault," the king said. "I'm going to kill him."

But Elisha had good news for the king.

"Tomorrow about this time you will have plenty," he said. "There will be so much food that a whole basket of grain will be sold for a just a few cents."

One of the king's noblemen heard Elisha's prophecy, but he didn't believe it.

"Is God going to open a window in heaven and rain this stuff down on us?" he jeered.

"Because you heard it, but didn't believe it, you will see this prophecy fulfilled, but you won't get to eat any of the food," Elisha told him.

The next day started out as grimly as every other day. But four men with the terrible disease of leprosy were outside the city talking.

Talk about hopeless! These people had a contagious disease and no one wanted them around. They were starving, too.

“If we go into the city, we will starve to death,” one of the lepers said. “If we stay here where we are, we will die. Why don’t we go to the camp of the Syrians? They might feed us if we beg. The worst they could do is kill us, and we are going to die anyway.”

The others agreed and they all went out to the field where the Syrian army was camped. They were surprised when no one challenged them as they came close to the tents. Then they saw why. Nobody was there! The tents were full of food and supplies, but no soldiers were anywhere to be found.

The lepers could hardly believe it. Right away they started stuffing themselves with food. Then they took clothes and treasures they found and hid them. Finally, they began to feel ashamed.

“We shouldn’t keep this to ourselves while our people are starving to death,” one of them said. “Let’s go tell the others the news.”

At first the king thought it was a trap and the Syrians would come and attack them when they went to check out the camp. Finally he sent a group to see what was going on. They came back with good news. Not only was there an empty camp with lots of food, but there were treasures and things strewn all along the road to the river.

God promised to supply plenty of food for them, and he did. The night before, the Syrians heard a loud noise. They thought it was the sound of troops coming to attack.

“The Israelites got the Hittites and the Egyptians to help them,” they cried. “We’d better run for it. We can never hope to defeat them all.”

They ran away as fast as they could, leaving all their supplies behind and dropping their treasures along the way as they fled for their lives.

The starving Israelites couldn’t wait when they found out the news. The whole city ran through the gate to get to the Syrian camp.

The king’s helper who refused to believe God could help was stationed at the gate that day. The Israelites were so intent on getting out that they ran over him and trampled him to death.

Elisha’s prophecy happened just as he had said. The man saw the answer, but didn’t get to eat any of the food.

The rest of the people had plenty, though, just as God promised.

The Life Lesson

Sometimes God’s promises seem hard to believe, but He always does just as He says. Nothing is too hard for God. He supplied food for the starving Israelites and He can take care of your needs, too.

Review Lessons

Why were the Israelites starving?

The Syrians had attacked them and they couldn't get supplies into the city.

What surprising news did Elisha give the king?

Tomorrow about this time there will be plenty. A basket of grain will be sold for pennies.

Why did the lepers go to the Syrian camp?

They were starving and thought the Syrians might give them food if they begged.

What did the lepers find there?

They found a deserted camp with plenty of food and supplies lying around.

What did the lepers do?

After they had taken all they needed, they went back and told the king.

Why was the camp deserted?

The night before, the Lord sent a great noise. The Syrians thought it was the sound of many soldiers coming after them. They ran in fear.

Did Elisha's prophecy happen as he said?

Yes.